

## Evaluation of Primary School Students' Internet Addiction Based on Parents' Opinions, Control, and Guidance

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to reveal the relationships between the internet addiction status of primary school students and the parental characteristics that affect it. In the study, which was conducted based on a relational survey model, data were collected from the parents of 150 students in the 4th grade of a public school. The data collected through the Parent-Child Internet Addiction Scale and personal information form were transformed into findings using nonparametric statistical analysis methods. The results indicated that there were no internet-addicted children in the study group. Limited symptoms were detected in approximately 5% of the children. In addition, it was concluded that there was a significant relationship between children's internet addiction levels and parents' behaviors of directing their children to social activities, setting rules, and supervising their children's internet use. On the other hand, the relationship between the general education level of the parents, their level of education about internet addiction, and their role model behaviors about technology and internet use, and their children's internet addiction levels could not be established.

**Keywords:** Internet Addiction, Parental Supervision, Child and Adolescent Health.

## İlköğretim Öğrencilerinin İnternet Bağımlılığının Ebeveynlerin Bakış Açılarına Göre Değerlendirilmesi

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### ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, ilkokul öğrencilerinin internet bağımlılık durumları ile bunu etkileyen ebeveyn özellikleri arasındaki ilişkileri ortaya koymaktır. İlişkisel tarama modeline dayalı olarak yürütülen çalışmada, bir devlet okulunun 4. sınıfında okuyan 150 öğrencinin velilerinden veri toplanmıştır. Ebeveyn-Çocuk İnternet Bağımlılığı Ölçeği ve kişisel bilgi formu aracılığıyla toplanan veriler, parametrik olmayan istatistiksel analiz yöntemleri kullanılarak bulgulara dönüştürülmüştür. Elde edilen bulgular, öncelikle grupta internet bağımlı çocuk olmadığı gösterilmiştir. Çocukların yaklaşık %5'inde sınırlı belirtiler tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca, çocukların internet bağımlılık düzeyleri ile ebeveynlerin çocukların sosyal aktivitelere yönlendirme, kural koyma ve çocukların internet kullanımının denetleme davranışları arasında anlamlı bir ilişki olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır. Öte yandan, ebeveynlerin genel eğitim düzeyi, internet bağımlılığın hakkındaki eğitim düzeyleri ve teknoloji ve internet kullanımı konusunda rol model olma davranışları ile çocukların internet bağımlılık düzeyleri arasında ilişki kurulamamıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Internet Bağımlılığı, Ebeveyn Denetimi, Çocuk ve Ergen Sağlığı.

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## Introduction

In our age, access to information has become easier with the renewed and constantly developing technology (Gültekin & Aydemir, 2021). Thanks to the developments in information technologies, communication has reached a mass scale, with the opportunity to access the internet anytime and anywhere. The Internet is in our lives in many areas, such as education, business, entertainment, communication, and shopping. This rapid change in the world has made the Internet widespread and caused people's dependency on the Internet to increase daily (Gültekin & Aydemir, 2021). This commitment has made the Internet essential to people's daily lives.

Today, when the Internet is used appropriately, it provides various benefits for children and adults (Perim Ketenciler et al., 2021). Many parents provide opportunities for their children to use the internet and technology to provide easy access to information, communicate, and have fun during their education processes. The internet, which is used by large masses, now allows children to explore the world and access information independently due to its ease of access (Kolcu et al., 2022). Children and adolescents can access a wide range of information sources online and may not have access to materials that support their learning processes (Koshy, 2018). Especially in education, online resources and educational platforms offered by the Internet help students increase their academic achievement (Koshy, 2018). In addition, using the Internet for entertainment purposes, such as social media and gaming platforms, increases young people's social interactions and strengthens their friendships (Kwak et al., 2022). Along with these opportunities, unconscious and uncontrolled use of the Internet leads to the emergence of addiction problems (Balci & Gülnar, 2009). Excessive Internet use causes various issues, especially in individuals who start using the Internet at a very young age. It is seen that this dysfunctional use of the Internet has been included in the related literature with the concept of Internet addiction. In the Turkish Language Institution, the concept of addiction is defined as '*the state of being addicted.*' In contrast, the concept of internet addiction is expressed with concepts such as '*pathological internet use*,' '*excessive internet use*,' or '*problematic internet use*.' The term "Internet addiction" describes a condition characterized by an inability to control one's use of the Internet, a decreased valuation of time spent without Internet access, and an increase in irritability and aggression when one is without access. Over time, this behavior can deteriorate one's work, social, and familial life (Young, 1998).

This phenomenon, which is defined as excessive internet use, is increasing unpredictably in our country

as well as all over the world. With excessive internet use, children and adolescents' social interaction styles, learning processes, and general quality of life also change. This situation significantly affects children and adolescents' psychological and physical health (Byun et al., 2009; Nathanson et al., 2013). Studies indicate that as the duration of adolescents' internet use increases, psychological problems tend to increase (Bozkurt et al., 2016; Hekim et al., 2019). It is primarily the case that excessive internet use is associated with psychopathological disorders, precisely conditions such as attention deficit, anxiety, and depression, among children and adolescents (Sigrlili, 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2019). It is emphasized that the increase in the number of technologies used based on the internet contributes negatively to this observed situation (Arnas, 2005). The negative impact on academic achievement and social isolation due to excessive internet use is another prominent problem (Kuss et al., 2013; Mane et al., 2018). The excessive and inappropriate physical use of technological devices by children has been linked to an increased risk of developing physical and mental health issues (Müller et al., 2014). For example, Koç et al. reported that there was a significant negative relationship between individuals with limited physical activity and internet addiction levels. (Koç et al., 2021). Similarly, Watanabe et al. emphasized a significant positive correlation between parents and their children's screen time, which increases the risk of obesity (Watanabe et al., 2016). Younes et al. stated that internet addiction has become one of the leading causes of sleep disorders. (Younes et al., 2016). Research shows that children often do not comply with appropriate ergonomic conditions when using computers and mobile devices, which leads to musculoskeletal disorders (Siste et al., 2020). This situation negatively affects children's learning abilities and overall quality of life. In conclusion, inappropriate overuse of technology and the Internet by children leads to physical and mental health problems. Therefore, it is of great importance for parents and educators to supervise children's use of technology and to teach them healthy habits.

According to the We Are Social Digital 2023 Global and Türkiye Report, it is understood that the rate of mobile phone usage in the world has reached 105.6%, internet usage has reached 64.4%, and active social media usage has reached 59.4%. When we look at the data of Türkiye, which has a population of approximately 86 million, it is seen that the mobile phone usage rate is 95.4%, the internet usage rate is 83.4%, and the active social media usage rate is 73.1% (Güvenliweb, 2024). According to the results of the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) August 2022 household information technology usage survey,

access to the Internet from home has reached 94%. This situation can be interpreted as increased internet use, internet-based applications, and mobile phones in our country and the world compared to the previous year. On the other hand, the numerical information provided by the Turkish Statistical Institute on internet use among children and adolescents reflects that internet and internet-based tools and applications have increased more rapidly among this group (TUIK, 2024b). According to TUIK, while the rate of internet use among children aged 6-15 was 50.8 percent in 2013, this rate increased to 82.7 percent in 2021 (TUIK, 2024a). The report also determined that smartphone usage increased faster among individuals in this age group. The TUIK report reveals that 47.3% of children who regularly play digital games play more than the planned time, 42.6% of them disrupt their responsibilities due to excessive gaming, 42.3% spend too much time playing games, and 28% of them feel restless and unhappy when they cannot play digital games (TUIK, 2024a). Factors such as the duration and frequency of Internet use, the time spent, and the environment in which the Internet is used increase the risk of Internet addiction, especially among children and adolescents (Shin, 2017). Another striking situation in the report is that 58.4% of children in the 6-15 age group believe their parents think their children play digital games excessively. Özaltın et al. revealed that children and adolescents have higher levels of internet use when parental supervision is lacking (Özaltın et al., 2022). Parents' attitudes toward internet use deeply affect children's behavior (Uncu et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2022). Many variables, such as the individual's exposure to digital neglect, unhealthy family roles, lack of correct role models in internet use, and parents' lack of competence in digital parenting, can cause children's internet addiction (Manap & Durmuş, 2021). The literature emphasizes that the control and support provided by parents on internet use can help children develop healthy internet habits (Wu et al., 2016). At this point, a review of the relevant literature shows that restrictive mediation (rule-setting) and Active or Co-Viewing Mediation (Guidance) strategies focused on parents are significant. Restrictive mediation is described in the literature as parents setting and enforcing clear guidelines, limits, and rules for their children's technology and internet use (Geurts et al., 2025; Lee, 2012). In contrast, Active or Co-Viewing Mediation (Guidance) involves parents' active involvement in their children's technology and internet use. This includes asking children questions about their online activities and explaining, interpreting, and discussing what they encounter when necessary (Ho et al., 2019). When we look at these two strategies in relation to children's behavioral development during technology and internet use, it is clear that restrictive mediation can lower online risks for children. However, too many restrictions can also limit children's chances for

positive interaction with digital content (Wright, 2016; Nikken & Schols, 2015). Active or Co-Viewing Mediation (Guidance) is seen as a strategy that helps children develop healthier habits for using digital content (Coller et al., 2016; Lou & Kim, 2019). Research indicates that when parents apply the Active or Co-Viewing Mediation (Guidance) strategy, children also build critical thinking skills about content during their online interactions (Cheng et al., 2018; Nikken & Schols, 2015). This situation can be interpreted as suggesting that parents should guide their children in the internet environment. One of the parents' primary responsibilities is to prepare their children for future challenges and changes (Sağbaş, 2022), so monitoring problematic internet use behaviors among young age groups becomes essential. In conclusion, the statistical information in the reports published in recent years shows that internet use among children and adolescents has increased rapidly, and this group has become more active in the digital world. This situation can have positive and negative consequences for children and young people. Therefore, parents and educators need to be cautious in this process and help children develop healthy internet use habits. These usage statistics reveal the necessity of studies examining children and adolescents' internet usage behaviors. Therefore, while this study examined the status of children's internet addiction according to parents' views, it also examined the effect of different parental characteristics on children's internet addiction.

The present study examined the relationships between the status of internet addiction among primary school students and the characteristics of their parents. In this framework, the following research questions were posed and investigated:

1. *What is the level of Internet addiction of primary school students?*
2. *Does the Internet addiction status of primary school students show a significant difference according to their parents' education levels?*
3. *Does the Internet addiction status of primary school students show a significant difference according to their parents' education on Internet and technology addiction?*
4. *Does the Internet addiction status of primary school students show a significant difference according to their parents' guiding behaviors towards social activities?*
5. *Does the Internet addiction status of primary school students show a significant difference according to their parents' rule-setting and controlling behaviors regarding internet use and digital game playing?*
6. *Does the Internet addiction status of primary school students show a significant difference according to their parents' behaviors of being a role model about internet and technology use?*

## Methods

### Research Model

This research was conducted based on the relational model and aligned with the determined purpose. Relational research enables the complexity of human behaviors to be understood or explained by working on existing phenomena. This model is particularly important in educational research, where understanding the relationships between different variables can lead to more robust findings and perspectives (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). By the nature of correlational research, the present study aimed to explain the relationship between the demographic variables determined as independent variables (parents' education levels, their awareness of internet and technology addiction, directing their children to social activities, setting rules and

supervising their children about internet use and digital game playing, being a role model for their children about internet and technology use) and the dependent variable (child internet addiction).

### Participants

This study's sample consists of 150 parents whose children continue their education in the 4th grade of primary school. Written consent was obtained from the parents. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Trabzon University for the research conducted and the data collection tools and informed consent text to be used in the process (Date: 24.04.2024, decision number: E-81614018-050.04-2400019545). Table 1 presents some demographic information about the parents participating in the study.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistical Findings About the Parents Participating in The Study (n = 150)

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	(%)
Educational Level	Primary Education	20	13.3
	High School	51	34.0
	Associate Degree	17	11.3
	Bachelor's Degree	51	34.0
	Postgraduate	11	7.3
Family income level	Low	5	3.3
	Middle	133	88.7
	High	12	8.0
Have you attended a training on technology addiction before?	Yes	57	38.0
	No	93	62
Whether you direct your child to social activities (art, sports, etc.)	No	15	10
	Partially	47	31.3
	Always	88	58.7
How you set rules about internet use and digital gaming	No	15	10
	Partially	56	37.3
	Always	79	52.7
Being a role model for your child in the use of technology	No	15	10
	Partially	47	31.3
	Always	88	58.7

As can be seen in Table 1, the education level of the majority of the participants is high school and above. The family income level is at the middle level. It is understood that more than half of the participants have attended training on technology addiction before. Similarly, it is understood that approximately 80 % of the participants make an effort to direct their children to social activities. It is seen that a small

minority of the participants, such as 10 %, do not set rules for children on internet use and playing digital games. It can be said that the vast majority of the participants (85 %) hold the view that they are role models for their children in terms of internet and technology use. On the other hand, data on the participants' facilities at home regarding internet access can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Household Internet Access Facilities for Parents Participating in the Study (N = 150)

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	(%)
Technology used	Mobile Phone	69	46.0
	Tablet	521	34.7
	Computer	29	19.3
Wired Internet Access	Yes	140	93.3
	No	10	6.7

As Table 2 shows, almost all (93.3 percent) of the participants' homes have fixed internet access. The most commonly used technology for internet access at home is mobile phones, with 46%. This is followed by tablets, with 34%, and computers come last. This situation reflects that internet access at home is becoming more mobilized.

### Data Collection Tools

Within the study's scope, the '*Personal Information Form*' and '*Family - Child Internet Addiction Scale*' were applied to the parents of the students included. Both data collection tools were converted into online forms with Google Forms. With the necessary permissions and consent, the parents of the participating students voluntarily completed the data collection tools online. *Personal Information Form*: The '*Personal Information Form*' prepared by the researcher was used to determine the demographic variables of the participants. Items related to parents' education levels, awareness of internet and technology addiction, directing their children to social activities, setting rules about internet use and playing digital games, and being a role model for their children about internet and technology use were added to the information form.

*Family-Child Internet Addiction Scale*: The '*Family-Child Internet Addiction Scale*', which was adapted into Turkish by Eşgi (2014) and consisted of 20 items, was used to evaluate the internet addiction of the parent and child. It is as difficult as possible for individuals to self-assess the levels of internet addiction caused by dysfunctional use of the internet, especially in young children. This may cause inaccurate measurement and mislead the assessment (Eşgi, 2014). For this reason, it is undoubtedly essential for individuals to be able to evaluate the internet addiction status of children, especially in the young age group; however, we also need criteria and scales that can be evaluated outside of themselves. The Parent-Child Internet Addiction Scale was developed, derived from Young's (1998) Internet Addiction Test, which allows families to evaluate their children. Eşgi (2014) carried out the adaptation, validity, and reliability study of the Parent-Child Internet Addiction Scale, which was developed for families to evaluate their children's internet addiction in Turkish. In this study, he categorized the

scale under four factors (social isolation, dysfunction, deprivation, and control difficulty). He considered that the items measured similar features with the factor analysis he applied to 20 items. He determined the total variance ratio explained by these four factors as 46.22 %. There are five items under the social isolation factor, five under the dysfunction factor, four under the deprivation factor, and six under the control difficulties factor. The items are answered with the options *Not applicable (0)*, *Rarely (1)*, *Occasionally (2)*, *Mostly (3)*, *Very often (4)*, and *Continuously (5)*.

### Statistical Analysis

In order to analyze the obtained data in the context of the research questions, reliability analysis was performed for the overall scale and factors. The data were arranged for reliability in the SPSS 26 statistical data analysis program. The alpha internal reliability coefficient for each factor and the overall scale was calculated. After it was determined that the alpha internal reliability coefficients were acceptable and above for the overall scale and sub-dimensions, the analysis phase was started. The correlation relations between the scale sub-dimensions were tested and presented in tabular form. Then, the basic assumptions were tested, and it was decided which parametric or nonparametric analysis techniques could be applied. At this stage, it was observed that the data were not generally distributed under categorical variables, that there were a few outliers, and that the variances were not homogeneous. Since the assumptions could not be met, it was decided to use the Kruskal - Wallis Test for multiple groups and the Mann - Whitney U Test for paired groups to analyze the research data. Mean Ranks, Chi-Square, and p-significance values were used to visualize Kruskal-Wallis Test results. The Mann - Whitney U Test results visualization used Mean Ranks, Rank Sums, U value, and p significance value.

### Results

This section first presents the reliability analysis results of the data obtained from the Family-Child Internet Addiction Scale. Finally, it presents the findings of the statistical analyses performed for the hypotheses established in parallel with the research questions.

Table 3 presents internal consistency values for scale and its separate factors.

**Table 3.** Cronbach Alpha Internal Consistency Values

Factors	Cronbach's Alfa
<i>Social Isolation</i>	.764
<i>Malfuctioning</i>	.773
<i>Deprivation</i>	.771
<i>Control Disability</i>	.857
<i>Scale overall</i>	.939

After the analyses, the reliability of the Family - Child Internet Addiction Scale was found to be  $\alpha = .939$ , the reliability of the *Social Isolation* sub-dimension was  $\alpha = .764$ , the reliability of the *Dysfunction* sub-dimension was  $\alpha = .773$ , the reliability of the *Deprivation* sub-dimension was  $\alpha = .771$ , and the reliability of the *Difficulty in Control* sub-dimension was  $\alpha = .857$ . These reliability values obtained for the sub-dimensions and the overall scale were interpreted as the data collected from the sample group were reliable.

#### **Objectives 1**

When the student-parent responses for the Family-Child Internet Addiction Scale were analyzed, no score of 80 and above was observed. Therefore, it is understood that no student group can be characterized as "internet-addicted" in the context of the criteria values and definitions of the scale used. However, it is understood that some students ( $n = 8$ , 5.3 %) are "those with limited symptoms." However,

considering the scale scores ( $n = 142$ , 94.7 %), it was determined that the vast majority were in the category of "no symptoms" at the point of internet addiction.

#### **Objectives 2**

Relational analyses were performed to determine the hypotheses. The findings obtained from the relational analyses are presented below.

$h_0$ : *No relationship exists between students' internet use status and their parents' education level.*

$h_1$ : *A relationship exists between students' internet usage status and their parents' education level.*

Table 4 gives the results of the Kruskal-Wallis test of the data obtained from the Family-Child Internet Addiction Scale regarding the students' internet use status according to their parents' education levels.

**Table 4.** The Relationship Between Parents' Education Levels and Students' Internet Use Status

Education level	Parents n = 150	Mean Ranks	Kruskal – Wallis Chi-Square	p
Primary education	20	22.00	4.301	.367
High school	51	14.00		
Associate license	17	24.00		
License	51	15.00		
Postgraduate	11	18.00		

The Kruskal-Wallis test result shows that the students' internet usage status does not differ from their parents' education levels ( $H (4) = 4,301$ ,  $p > .05$ ). This finding confirms the hypothesis  $h_0$ , which reflects no relationship between students' internet usage status and their parent's education level.

#### **Objectives 3**

Hypotheses tested:

$h_0$ : *There is a relationship between students' internet usage status and their parent's level of education on internet and technology addiction.*

$h_0$ : *There is no relationship between students' internet usage status and their parent's level of education on internet and technology addiction.*

Table 5 gives the results of the Mann - Whitney *U* Test, which analyzed the relationship between the parents' previous education on Internet and technology addiction and their children's Internet usage status.

**Table 5.** The Relationship Between Parents' Education on Technology Addiction and Their Children's Internet Use

Education status	Parents n = 150	Mean Ranks	Rank Sums	Mann-Whitney U	p
Yes	57	14.00	70.94		
No	93	18.00	78.30	2390.50	.314

The analyses' results showed that students' internet use status was not related to whether their parents had previously received training on internet and technology addiction ( $U = 2390.50$ ,  $p > .05$ ). These results confirm hypothesis  $h_0$ .

#### Objectives 4

Hypotheses tested:

$h_0$ : There is no relationship between parents' directing their children to social activities and students' internet use status.

$h_1$ : There is a relationship between parents' directing their children to social activities and students' internet usage status.

Table 6 gives the results of the Mann - Whitney  $U$  Test, which analyzed the relationship between parents' directing their children to social activities and their children's Internet usage status. Although this variable includes three categories: 'no,' 'partially,' and 'always,' no response was observed in the 'no' category in the parent responses. In this context, the Mann - Whitney  $U$  Test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference between two categorical variables.

**Table 6.** The Relationship Between Orientation to Social Activities and Children's Internet Use

Orientation to social activities	Parents n = 150	Mean Ranks	Ranks Sum	Mann - Whitney U	p
Partially	51	21.00	87.52		
Always	99	13.50	69.12	1923.00	.014

The results of the analyses show that according to the parents' directing their children to social activities, their children's internet use differed ( $U = 1923.00$ ,  $p < .05$ ). These results validate hypothesis  $h_1$ . Therefore, it can be stated that children's involvement in social activities differentiates their internet use. The findings also reflect that parents are sensitive to their children's involvement in social activities.

#### Objectives 5

Hypotheses tested:

**Table 7.** The Relationship Between Parents' Rule-Setting Behaviors And Children's Internet Use

Rule Making	Parents n = 150	Mean Ranks	Kruskal - Wallis Chi-Square	p
No	5	20.00		
Partially	63	28.00	43.09	.000
Always	82	10.00		

The Kruskal - Wallis test result shows that there is a significant relationship between parents' rule-setting behaviors regarding their children's internet and technology use and their children's internet use status ( $H (2) = 43.09$ ,  $p < .05$ ). According to the results obtained, the scores of the parents who partially apply the rule-setting behavior (Mean = 28.00) are higher than the scores of the parents who always apply it (Mean = 10.00). This finding supports hypothesis  $h_1$ .

#### Objectives 6

Hypotheses tested:

$h_0$ : There is no relationship between parents' being role models in internet and technology use and students' internet use status.

$h_1$ : A relationship exists between parents' status as role models in internet and technology use and students' internet use status.

Table 8 gives the results of the Kruskal - Wallis Test, which is based on the relationship between parents' status as role models for their children in using the Internet and technology and their children's Internet usage status.

**Table 8.** The Relationship Between Parents' Role Model Behaviors and Children's Internet Use

Role Modelling	Parents n = 150	Mean Ranks	Kruskal – Wallis Chi-Square	p
No	15	23.00		
Partially	82	18.00	5.430	.066
Always	53	10.00		

It was found that there is no significant relationship between parents' role-modeling behaviors in internet and technology use and their children's internet use ( $H(2) = 5.430, p > .05$ ). This finding confirms the hypothesis  $h_0$ . It can be interpreted that students' internet use is not affected by their parents' role-model behaviors.

## Discussion

Analysis of the data in Table 1 indicates that 58% of participating parents demonstrate rule-setting behavior in their children's internet use and digital gaming activities. Additionally, the same proportion of parents believe they can serve as role models for their children regarding internet use. These findings suggest that the technology and internet use behaviors of the parents in the study align with a restrictive mediation, or rule-setting, strategy. The elementary school age of the children whose parents participated may contribute to the adoption of stricter attitudes toward technology and internet use. Such parental behaviors can mitigate the negative effects of technology and digital content for younger children, whose self-regulation skills are not yet fully developed (Lee, 2012). However, maintaining high levels of restrictive mediation as children grow older and develop physically and cognitively may limit their opportunities for positive engagement with digital content. Therefore, it is recommended that school guidance services educate parents on strategies for effective role modeling and provide guidance on technology and internet use.

Considering the evaluations made by the parents about their children, it was revealed that no students were categorized as internet addicts in the study. In addition, it was observed that a small portion of approximately 5 % of the 150 students were in the 'limited symptomatic' category ( $50 < \text{points} < 79$ ). It was determined that the remaining 85% were in the 'no symptoms' category ( $< 49 \text{ points}$ ). The results are highly comparable to those of the study by Aközlü et al. (2021), which involved 139 parents and examined their children's internet addiction during the pandemic. The aforementioned study revealed that none of the individuals in the target age group exhibited low-level symptoms of internet addiction. Considering the point where the opportunities to access the Internet and technology have reached in daily life, this finding can be interpreted as very

promising. For example, Li et al. (2014) conducted a study with primary school students and found that approximately 12 % of the students were addicted to the Internet. Another study emphasized that the ease of access to the internet and technology for children in urban life plays a critical role in turning them into internet addicts (Sowndarya & Pattar, 2018). Similarly, Kaur and Ahmad (2020) revealed a positive relationship between children's home access opportunities and problematic internet use behaviors. Considering the characteristics of the group from which data were collected in this study, approximately 93 % of them have internet access that they can use at home at any time. More than 80% of them access the internet with mobile devices, so no student group must be considered an internet addict. The literature shows that internet addiction is affected by variables such as demographic factors, gender, socio-economic status, family and education, as well as access to the internet and technology (Aközlü et al., 2021; Fariz & Sarıcı Bulut, 2019). Therefore, this result can be interpreted as being affected by this study's family and relational factors.

Considering the academic (Demir & Kutlu, 2018), physical, social, and psychological (Li et al., 2020; Yavuz, 2019; Zhou et al., 2022) problems caused by internet addiction in children, it is emphasized that the role of the family in this process has become even more critical (Chng et al., 2015). From the findings of this study, it is understood that there is no relationship between the educational status of parents and their children's internet addiction levels. Different results regarding the relationship between family education status and child internet addiction are seen when the literature is examined. For example, in his study on primary school students, Baykan (2015) did not find a significant relationship between family education level and child internet addiction. Similarly, in the study by Fariz and Sarıcı Bulut (2019), it was observed that there was no significant difference between the level of education of mothers and fathers and the level of internet addiction of their children. In another study, it was concluded that the mother's education level affected the child's internet addiction level (Çevik & Çelikkaleli, 2010). Similarly, Eligül (2020) did not find a relationship between the father's education level and the child's internet addiction level. However, in another study, it was concluded that the risk of addiction for the child increased as the father's education level increased (Kılıç et al., 2016). Another

study found that the father's education level was the main factor (Demir et al., 2017). These results reflect that the relationship between parental education level and the child's internet addiction behavior is uncertain. On the other hand, Russell and Russell (1987) emphasize that the mother-child relationship is closer than the father-child relationship. Therefore, the fact that the mother's level of education is more determinative in the way the child's internet use behavior turns into addiction can be explained in this way. However, since the gender information of the parents who filled out the scale form was not obtained in this study, it was impossible to compare and make a similar inference from the data obtained.

Another finding of the study is that the awareness of parents about internet and technology addiction does not show a significant difference in students' internet addiction levels. The quality and content scope of the training on the use of technology that parents attended for awareness purposes may affect this result. When the literature is examined, it is pointed out that parents with higher digital competence can control and direct their children's activities on the Internet more effectively (Pons-Salvador et al., 2022). Similarly, it is emphasized that parents with digital competence contribute to developing more open communication with their children about internet use and the emergence of a correct understanding of use (Ahmadian et al., 2022). Kalkan and Cerit (2023) revealed that factors other than family communication, family economic level, and parents' education play a more critical role. Similarly, Kılıç et al. (2016) concluded that the availability of internet access at home and parental education level cannot be the absolute variable in children's internet addiction. Once more, disparate studies conducted with adolescents underscore that parental educational attainment and digital proficiency cannot be the sole explanatory variables for internet addiction (Özçeylan et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2016). Considering both the result of this study and the related literature, it is seen that the relationship between children's internet use and their parent's level of education on internet and technology addiction is controversial.

The study revealed that there is a significant relationship between parents' directing their children to social activities and children's internet addiction levels. It was understood that parents who always direct their children to social activities accepted their children's internet use behaviors as more problem-free than those who partially direct their children to social activities. Children directed to social activities by their parents spend less time online (Hanimoğlu, 2018). Students who participate in activities in their social lives may become more distant from the risk of internet addiction (Can & Onan, 2023; Zorbaz et al., 2020). It is stated that the increase in leisure time spent

by children at the primary school level alone or with their peers triggers excessive internet use (Idwan et al., 2022). Similarly, it was determined that the prevalence of digital game addiction among children encouraged and supported by their parents to engage in social activities was lower (Fariz & Sarıcı Bulut, 2019; Yiğit, 2017). In another study, it is stated that the inability of the family to direct the child to social activities may lead the child to internet addiction (Gunuc & Dogan, 2013). These results are similar to the results of this study. Conversely, the absence of a correlation between parents' involvement in their children's social activities and children's internet usage is corroborated by various studies. For example, Lwin et al. stated that there is often a disconnect between children's reported online activities and parents' awareness of these activities. Parents frequently voice concerns regarding their perceived lack of control over their children's online interactions. This suggests that merely directing children to social activities may not be an effective strategy for reducing internet use or addiction (Lwin et al., 2012). This disconnect could be interpreted as suggesting that parents' efforts to engage children in offline socializing may not contribute to a reduction in internet use. Similarly, it has been emphasized that parental involvement in encouraging social activities is not necessarily associated with increased internet use (Badri et al., 2016). These actions to be taken by the family for direct social interaction can be interpreted as children participating in online activities for reasons unrelated to parental guidance, such as personal interests or peer influences. Similarly, it is stated that the situation that significantly affects children's internet behavior reflects their communication and interaction with their parents rather than simple instructions to participate in social activities (Ko et al., 2014). In short, it is understood that parents' having the necessary skills and knowledge about internet use directly affects this process in addition to directing their children to social activities (Livingstone et al., 2017). Therefore, when the main characteristics of the participant group in this study are considered with a holistic approach, it can be stated that similar constructive factors for parents coexist. The result can be interpreted as a reflection of this.

The findings showed a significant relationship between parents' rule-setting behaviors towards their children regarding internet use and digital game playing and children's internet use status. Venkatesh et al. (2019) argue that parental supervision based on trust and respect is essential for children to act responsibly even when their parents are not around. In a study conducted in Korea on parenting styles and children's internet addiction, it was concluded that parenting behavior with few or no rules and restrictions increases the risk of internet addiction in children (Marina & Marija, 2019). Similarly, Şenol et

al. (2023) found that parenting guidance strategies are essential in preventing digital game addiction in a study on preschool children. They concluded that active parenting strategies encourage children to be more controlled towards internet use. Another study determined that parents' rule-setting behaviors were related to academic and health problems rather than concerns about the child's internet use (Fidan, 2021). Another study examining the peer dimension in Internet use behaviors concluded that children's peer reactions and personal preferences have as significant an impact as parental control (Rahutami, 2019). Although this result shows that parental control alone may not be sufficient to manage internet use effectively, it reflects that rule-making actions are significant, considering children's importance to peer interactions and social interaction in the digital environment. Individuals confronted with rules may be more able to control and limit themselves over time and develop conscious technology use skills than those who are not. The relevant literature strongly supports that internet use behaviors in children are closely related to supervisory parental behaviors (Livingstone & Smith, 2014; Trumello et al., 2021; Yigit & Günük, 2020).

Finally, the study revealed that there was no significant relationship between students' internet addiction and their parents' role-modeling status. However, many studies in the literature show that parental behaviors and attitudes significantly affect children's internet use patterns, including the possibility of developing internet addiction (Lam, 2020; Ren & Zhu, 2022; Su et al., 2018). In these studies on parental behaviors and child attitudes in the context of internet use behaviors, it is emphasized that when parents fail to create a suitable role model for appropriate internet use, the likelihood of children developing excessive and problematic internet use behaviors increases. Considering the findings obtained in this study, it was revealed that the target group did not show symptoms of internet addiction, and even less than 5% of them showed limited symptoms. Therefore, the absence of a dependent group in the results obtained can be interpreted as a reason for the lack of similar results in the studies in the literature. The absence of a group in the dependent category may also be related to the small age group of the sample. It is understood that most of the studies in the literature were conducted with adolescent and older groups. Some studies show that inappropriate role model behaviors of parents regarding internet use have negative consequences for children (Gül, 2023; Manap, 2020; Manap & Durmuş, 2021). Considering these studies, the findings can also be evaluated as the group of parents whose collected data was not negative role models for their children.

## Limitations and Directions / Suggestions for Future Research

This research was conducted with the parents of a group of students in the 4th grade of a public primary school in a district center. Therefore, Parent-Child Internet Addiction Scale data were collected from 150 volunteer parents. Expanding the study's sample group and collecting data from students simultaneously may contribute to interpreting the results. In addition, in the demographic data collection tool for parents, gender information can be obtained for parents and students, and comparisons can be made in the context of gender. The studies conducted on children's internet use behaviors in the literature show that rule-setting and controlling behaviors differ in the context of mother and father. Although this study reflects that the phenomenon of internet addiction is weak in the sample groups in young age groups, it indicates that the risk may occur when it is not managed correctly. For this reason, more effective and meaningful inferences can be made about parental behaviors and factors by collecting data from the same parents for their children in older age groups, if any, and comparing children in the same household.

### Main Points

- *There is no relationship between students' internet use and their parents' education level*
- *There is no relationship between students' internet use and whether their parents have received training on internet and technology addiction before or not*
- *There is a significant relationship between parents' directing their children to social activities and their children's internet use*
- *There is a significant relationship between parents' rule-setting behaviors regarding their children's internet and technology use and children's internet use status*

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