Research on the Impact of Parenting Styles on Internet Addiction in Primary School Students

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Abstract: With the rapid development of mobile phones and smartwatches, many primary school students have become increasingly dependent on the internet, to the extent that it affects their normal lives. Parental upbringing significantly influences children's behavior, as a warm family environment can reduce internet dependency, while an overly strict and highly controlling one can increase the amount of time primary school students spend on the internet. This study investigated the impact of parenting styles on Internet addiction in adolescents. The sample comprised 71 elementary school students, including 34 females and 37 males. A personal information form, "The Revised Chinese Internet Addiction Scale (CIAS-R)," and "The 21-item Chinese version of the s-EMBU" were used in the data gathering process. Regression analysis, simple correlation, F-test, and t-test methods were applied in data analysis. According to the findings, internet addiction is favorably connected with perceived poor parenting styles and negatively correlated with perceived positive parenting styles. Furthermore, there are gender differences in the prevalence of internet addiction among teenagers, with male teens being more likely than female teens to experience problematic online addiction.

Keywords: Internet addiction, Parenting styles, Primary school students, Gender.

1. Introduction

As internet technology advanced, the internet penetration rate among urban and rural teenagers in China has surpassed 95%, and the total number of underage internet users has exceeded 18.3 million. Teenagers of various age groups are using the internet, and its widespread availability has made it easy for most children to access a wide range of information. However, with the rise of online streaming and mobile games, many teenagers now spend a significant amount of their leisure time on their phones, with some even becoming addicted to the internet, leading to serious cases of internet dependence and addiction.

It's important to comprehend the elements that contribute to Internet addiction, and parental practices are one important aspect. Parenting styles are categorized according to a broad pattern of attitudes and emotional support. Parenting behaviors, emotional support, and attitude in parent-child interactions are all considered to be part of parenting style, which is assessed using various versions of the Egna Minnenav Barndoms Uppfostran. It is divided into three categories: overprotection, rejection, and emotional warmth [1]. Previous studies have shown a link between parental style and adolescent and child Internet addiction [2,3]. Positive parenting practices, such as emotional warmth,

are significantly negatively correlated with Internet addiction, whereas negative parenting practices, such as rejection and overprotection, are significantly positively correlated with Internet addiction.

This study aims to collect and analyze the parenting styles and internet usage patterns of 71 primary school students through two major scales. Through meticulous and thorough data analysis, the study seeks to clarify the specific effects that various parental upbringing styles may have on the risk of internet addiction among elementary school children. Exploring the impact of family parenting styles on students' Internet addiction is not only beneficial for guiding adolescents to use the Internet more effectively—ensuring it serves them rather than controlling them—but also for improving the quality of student development. This exploration allows for reflection on the relationship between parenting styles and internet addiction, prompting both parents and teachers to reassess their educational approaches. Such reflection helps parents understand the importance of their parenting styles in preventing adolescent Internet addiction.

2. Methods

A total of 76 primary school students (aged 8-13) from urban areas in a third-tier city in southeastern China were recruited for this study using a random sampling method. Out of these, 71 valid questionnaires were collected, resulting in a valid response rate of 93.42%. Of the participants, 52.1% were males (37) and 47.9% were females (34).

A self-report questionnaire on parenting style and Internet addiction was filled out by the participants. The Revised Chinese Internet Addiction Scale (CIAS-R) and the Chinese version of the Short-Form Egna Minnenav Barndoms Uppfostran (s-EMBU) were used to assess internet addiction and parenting style, respectively.

The original Swedish edition of the Egna Minnenav Barndoms Uppfostran (81-item EMBU), which assesses EMBU reliability, is where the acronym "EMBU" originates. Instead than evaluating early recollections of parental upbringing, this popular self-report questionnaire evaluates perceived parenting. Three sections make up the 21-item Chinese version of the s-EMBU, which is designed to assess parenting styles: Rejection (6 items, representing critical, punitive, and abusive parental attitudes), Emotional Warmth (7 items, representing parental emotional support and positive behaviors), and Overprotection (8 items, representing anxious, intrusive, and overly involved parenting patterns). These parts include items such as "My father/mother praises me" (Emotional Warmth), "My father/mother punishes me even for the smallest mistakes" (Rejection), and "I feel that my father/mother interferes with everything I do" (Overprotection).

Parenting styles, including Rejection and Overprotection, are coded as negative parenting styles, while Emotional Warmth is coded as a positive parenting style. Items were rated on a four-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 4 (always). This instrument has been demonstrated to have satisfactory validity and reliability in the Chinese population.

Originally created by Chen [4], the revised Chinese Internet Addiction Scale (CIAS-R) is a self-report screening tool that contains statements characterizing students' problematic or pathological use of the internet. This 19-item scale ranges from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4), with higher scores indicating a greater degree of Internet addiction.

In the final scoring of the scale, scores below 46 are classified as belonging to the "No Symptoms" group, scores between 46 and 53 are categorized as the "Partial Symptoms" group, and scores above 53 are classified as the "Internet Addict" group.

With SPSS version 28.0, statistics for descriptive purposes, patterns, and analysis of variance were carried out.

3.   Results

Analyzing the results of the statistical analysis of the research's data collection is the purpose of this part.

3.1.   Gender distribution of primary school students with Internet addiction

Table 1: Distribution of Internet addiction among primary school students by gender

Gender	Types of Internet addiction	Number	Percentage (%)
Males	No Symptoms	22	59.5
	Partial Symptoms	9	24.3
	Internet Addict	6	16.2
Females	No Symptoms	30	88.2
	Partial Symptoms	3	8.8
	Internet Addict	1	3.0

According to Table 1, among the males, there are 22 individuals in the "No Symptoms" group, accounting for 59.5%; 9 individuals in the "Partial Symptoms" group, accounting for 24.3%; and 6 individuals in the "Internet Addict" group, accounting for 16.2%. Among the females, there are 30 individuals in the "No Symptoms" group, accounting for 88.2%; 3 individuals in the "Partial Symptoms" group, accounting for 8.8%; and 1 individual in the "Internet Addict" group, accounting for 3.0%. The proportion of males in the "No Symptoms" group is lower than that of females, while the proportions in the "Partial Symptoms" and "Internet Addict" groups are higher among males, indicating that males

The research findings indicate a higher proportion of Internet addiction among primary school males. This may be partly attributed to traditional collectivist Chinese culture and a patriarchal society. Influenced by Confucian philosophy, traditional Chinese families often believe that parents should be stricter with sons, teaching them to shoulder responsibilities and pressures to prevent mistakes, whilst daughters ought to be watched after and protected. There is a proverb that states, "Raising a daughter should be generous, while raising a son should be cost-effective." This is another reason for the inconsistent views that parents have about men. Traditionally, men have been subjected to greater expectations and familial pressure. But, given the increasingly significant roles that modern women play in society, there may be more pressure on them to strike a balance between their obligations to their families and their careers.

3.2.   Differences in parenting styles according to gender

Table 2: Gender differences in parenting styles

Variables	Males (N=37)	Females (N=34)	t	p
	M±SD	M±SD		
Paternal emotional warmth	2.64±0.78	2.60±0.77	0.56	0.58
Maternal emotional warmth	2 92±0.63	2.90±0.58	0.32	0.75
Paternal rejection	1.69±0.63	1.61±0.63	1.00	0.32
Maternal rejection	1.54±0.51	1.45±0.42	1.66	0.99
Paternal overprotection	1.95±0.56	1.87±0.56	1.09	0.28
Maternal overprotection	1.93±0.60	1.91±0.59	0.38	0.71

As shown in Table 2, the results of the independent samples t-test indicate that there are no significant differences in the dimensions of parental rearing styles with regard to gender.

Previous studies have revealed a link between male Internet addiction and parenting practices that are inconsistent or contradictory [5]. Another perspective is that gender differences exist in the external expression of emotions. Throughout their development, females and males receive different levels of encouragement for emotional expression from their families. Compared to females, males receive less encouragement to express their emotions. As part of their socialization, females experience a more tolerant environment for expressing their emotions and learn to express their feelings more freely than males, due to the societal roles and stereotypes imposed on males. Considering these differences in emotional expression, it can be argued that males have a higher tendency to develop Internet addiction.

3.3. Descriptive statistics and correlations between parenting styles and Internet addiction

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and correlations between study variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Positive parenting style	2.749	.637	-		
2. Negative parenting style	1.881	.449	-.182***	-	
3. Internet addiction	1.951	.661	-.088**	.235***	-

$*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.$

Table 3 displays the relationships between each of the research variables. A positive parenting approach showed an inverse relationship. Emotional warmth and other positive parenting techniques are effective in reducing Internet addiction. On the other hand, poor parenting practices like rejection and overprotection may increase a child's chance of being addicted to the Internet.

It was found that there was a negative relation between Internet addiction and democratic parenting style [6]. The analysis of this survey reveals that the development of Internet addiction is associated with specific parenting styles, and these families often exhibit a lack of communication and understanding between parents and children. In an overly controlling parenting style, parents demand that children comply with their wishes without room for personal opinions or choices. This type of upbringing often leads children to develop in one of two extreme ways. One is "Dependence and Poor Social Skills", which refers that children may become highly dependent on their parents, with underdeveloped social skills and difficulty coping with stress. The high-pressure parenting prevents them from confiding in their parents, leading to avoidance behaviors. In the era of advanced electronic technology, elementary school students have more free time online, making it easy for them to rely on the internet for freedom. They find various ways to relieve stress and feel comfortable expressing parts of themselves that are not visible in real life. The other is "Extreme Resentment Towards Parents". Alternatively, children may develop extreme resentment towards their parents, viewing them as oppressive. In the absence of parental control, the virtual world offers a space where their anger and tension are alleviated, which can gradually lead them to become consumed by the freedoms of the online environment. Overall, overly authoritarian parenting is detrimental to the emotional and psychological development of children. Interpersonal connection education and pertinent mental health programs or activities should be beneficial to students. To promote the growth of their children, families should choose a parenting style that is appropriate, encouraging, and positive [7].

4. Conclusion

The purpose of this research project was to look into how parenting practices may influence adolescents' propensity for Internet addiction. According to the study's findings, boys in China's primary schools are more prone than girls to develop an Internet addiction. The study also discovered a noteworthy distinction between parenting style and Internet addiction in teenagers. Positive parenting approaches can, on the one hand, lower the likelihood of Internet addiction. Conversely, there is a strong positive correlation between Internet addiction and poor parenting.

Parents should balance work and family life to increase quality time with their children and create a sense of security. For instance, engaging in household chores together, such as washing dishes or doing laundry, strengthens family bonds and teaches children valuable life skills. This leads to a more harmonious family relationship and enhances the child's work ethic. For increasingly mature elementary school students, parents should develop effective communication skills and stay informed about their children's situations. Effective communication is often the best way to address issues, whether it involves guiding children to develop correct values or allowing them to share personal and emotional concerns with their parents.

This study had several limitations. First, all the data is based on self-reports, which may be less accurate due to the understanding abilities of elementary school students. Second, parenting styles can vary across different regions, and this study primarily reflects the traditional Chinese cultural context of "strict fathers and empathetic mothers." Future research should consider the unique parenting styles of different cultural backgrounds. Third, there may be intermediary variables influencing the relationship between parenting styles and Internet addiction, such as interpersonal issues and children's mental health. Future studies should incorporate additional variables to provide a more comprehensive analysis.

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