

The Relationship between Mothers' Amount of Cyber Use and their Level of Intimacy with the Severity of Children's Hyperactivity

*Leila Safari Salestani¹ and Dr. Hassan Boland²

¹Department of Clinical Psychology, Rasht Branch, Islamic Azad University, Rasht, Iran.

²Assistant Professor, Department of Counseling, Faculty of Literature and Human Sciences, University of Guilan, Rasht, Iran.

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study is to investigate the possibility of a relation between mothers' amount of cyber use and their intimacy levels with the severity of their children's hyperactivity. The method used in this study is correlation and samples were chosen using multistage cluster random sampling. The population consists of approximately 17,326 mothers living in Rasht who have children in preschool, first grade or second grade. The sample size was 377, according to Morgan table. Data collection tools were Young's Internet Addiction Test (IAT), Walker and Thompson's Intimacy Scale, Connors' ADHD Test (parents form). Data obtained from this research were analyzed using inferential statistics (multiple regression, Pearson correlation coefficient) and SPSS-20 software and the results showed that when there's a positive correlation ($r = 0.16$) and significance level ($P < 0.01$) the amount of cyber use is directly related to the severity of hyperactivity in children. Mothers' intimacy levels also have an inverse relation with it when there's a negative correlation ($r = -0.19$) and significance level ($p < 0.01$). In other words, it can be expected with 90% certainty that with increase in mother's amount of cyber use, her child's hyperactivity increases and with increase in mother's intimacy level, her child's hyperactivity decreases.

KEY WORDS: Cyber use, Level of Intimacy, Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder

INTRODUCTION

Cyber use means being active in an environment consisting of online and anarchic networks which enable communication between people with no intermediary [1]. The term Cyberspace was first introduced in 1984 by William Gibson in his science fiction novel *Necromancer*. The term was used to describe a virtual space in which words, relations, data, wealth and power appeared through communications and computers [2]. With the rapid developments of communication technology and two major, effective, and interactive trends of "Globalization and Virtualization", and transition of human lives to cyber space's, the virtualization is the main cause of change in thought and behavior patterns of large portions of people especially the young ones¹. It seems like the Internet has the power to destroy the minds and completely transform our communication, socialization and trade modes. This network is also capable of shifting human beings' mental decision making points and can govern our behavior⁴. Online relationships take the place of family relationships and old friends very quickly and in most cases lead to failed marriages and instability in family relationships [3]. Studies show that man is innately needy and this leads to him always searching for correct ways to satisfy his diverse needs. The extent of these actions for satisfying one's needs and achieving the desired objectives can be affected by many social-psychological factors. These factors often overlap and establish mutual relations. The need for intimacy and close relationships with others is one of the basic needs of any individual [4]. According to Stanberg and Gragek, intimacy includes emotional attachment which means having feelings of romance, warmth, closeness, mutual understanding and support, and the ability to connect and communicate [5].

Loving another human being who means having an interest in promoting their quality of life, and sharing yourself and your belongings with someone is a part of intimacy as well [6]. Scientific studies about intimate relationships as an important aspect of marriage have been started since 1960 with analyses done by Miller and et al. Family theoreticians believe intimate relationship between spouses creates family identity, supplies family members' mental health and is a strong protective factor against individual and social problems [7]. When the conditions of a single family member or all of them change, all aspects of the family are affected for the better or worse. Because of this, the well-being of family and its ability to perform normally is related to all its members' health [8]. Family is a social institution that acts as a mirror in the face of society's main elements and is the

*Corresponding Author: Leila Safari Salestani, Department of Clinical Psychology, Rasht Branch, Islamic Azad University, Rasht, Iran. Email: guilan.sad@gmail.com

reflection of all social ills. On the other hand, the family, especially women as mothers is one of the main influences on the society. Motherhood is a skill with precise principles which is innately put in women and any negligence and mistake in it leads to the corruption of society, but if done with care, it creates a developed and benevolent society [9]. The studies performed on inside family interactions of children with ADHD show that sometimes in their families, there are problems regarding family members' relationships with each other. Today with new studies and effective treatment strategies, especially in explaining ADHD's etiology, it has been noticed that relationships between children with ADHD and their parents is a very important issue that should not be neglected by researchers and therapists [10].

Given the high prevalence of the disorder and with regards to its prognosis and progression and the mentioned problems (the high amount of cyber use and level of intimacy in families), it seems like neither the effects of mothers' cyber use and their levels of intimacy on children with ADHD nor the effects of mothers' amount of cyber use on their intimacy and both their effects on the severity of ADHD in children have not been studied yet. Finding such relations can be very helpful in planning preventive and treatment programs. Today the services offered in the cyberspace have created brand new relationships and the attachment to it has distanced people from real world and has had negative effects on their lives. Now, if the high amount of time spent on cyber world by mothers, who without a doubt have an important role in the family, prevents them from doing their wifely and motherly duties, it will definitely damage the family's general health. So, we decided to focus on the possibility of a relation between mothers' amount of cyber use and their levels of intimacy and the severity of their children's hyperactivity [10].

Some studies have focused on the negative effects of cyber use on people and some have analyzed the effects of parents' interactions with children diagnosed with ADHD. In the study on interactions between parents and children in families with ADHD children in Iran, it has been shown by Alizadeh that these parents have much better relationships with their children [11]. The studies done by Sohrabi et al, indicated a relation between social isolation, depression, and loss of family connections and excessive use of the Internet [12]. Gharehbaghi, in his research confirmed the effects of marital conflicts and parental relationships on the prediction of Psychopathological, emotional and behavioral symptoms in children [13]. Borjali *et al*, concluded in their studies that for controlling and treating children with ADHD, in addition to drug therapy, complementary therapies should be used especially to increase and improve modes of communication between parents and children with ADHD as well as correcting modes of behavior between them¹⁰. Kangalu et al, research showed that teaching behavioral principles to parents can be helpful in reducing vexatious behaviors in children with ADHD [14].

Hezar Jaribi and Safari-e Shaali, concluded that one of the effects of addiction to the Internet is that the addicted spends less time with his family and its symptoms include virtual infidelity, isolation, sleep disorder, the need to be alone and forgetting family responsibilities [15]. In the studies done in foreign countries, analyzing children with ADHD's interactions with their parents showed that psychological pressure is evident in their relationships [10]. Mesh and Johnson (1991) showed in their studies on children with ADHD' sin side family interactions that sometimes in these children's families there are problems between members [16]. JurielsArsen, found out in his study that conflicts between parents in child development leads to behavioral problems in children. Pisterman's et al, show that change in parents' behavioral interactions is effective in improving symptoms inpre-school children with ADHD [17]. According to Anastopolos, Shelton, and Dopowel, teaching parents is more common than any other family interventions¹⁰. Krat et al in a two year study about Internet users concluded that excessive use of the Internet is accompanied by a decrease in family connections and participation in local social circles [18]. Greenfield, found out in his studies that marriage and sex are the most affected areas by Internet addiction⁴. When analyzing 447 adults using the Internet for 16 hours per week for one year, Mircrack's *et al*, concluded that some people used in the sample got separated from their spouses [19]. Gonlix, also referred to the relation between parents' successful treatment of depression and improvement in performance and symptoms in children [20]. Weinberger *et al*, reached this conclusion after a longitudinal study that insincerity in young spouses is an important prediction tool for divorce in midlife [12]. According to Minnott et al, marital satisfaction which intimacy is one of its important components has an effect on other spouses' roles like parental roles [21].

Research hypotheses

Main hypothesis: There's a relation between mothers' amount of cyber use and their levels of intimacy and the severity of their children's hyperactivity.

Alternative hypotheses:

- 1- There's a relation between mother's amount of cyber use and the severity of her child's hyperactivity.
- 2- There's a relation between mother's level of intimacy and the severity of her child's hyperactivity.
- 3- There's a relation between mother's amount of cyber use and her level of intimacy.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study is correlational. In this scheme only degrees of correlation and relations between the variables are analyzed. The researcher in this study seeks to examine the possible relation between mothers' amount of cyber use and their levels of intimacy and the severity of their children's hyperactivity. All the mothers whose children were in pre-school and elementary schools of Rasht form the population of this study. According to statistics gathered from Deputy of Elementary Education of the province, the city of Rasht has 52 schools for boys and 56 schools for girls and 64 schools are coed which collectively count as 172 elementary schools and pre-schools. (In the area 1; first grade, 3818 students, second grade, 2798 students and in area 2; first grade 3780 and second grade 2829 students) and also 4191 children in pre-school which collectively reaches to 17326 children. So the population of this study almost includes 17326 mothers living in Rasht whom their children are in pre-school, first grade and second grade and the sample size were calculated 377 based on Morgan table. The population's members in this study were chosen by multistage cluster random sampling. It has been tried that all educational, social, and economical levels (high, medium, and low) have representatives in the clusters. Since the Education of Rasht province has two areas, schools in three levels of high, medium and low were selected from each area, with each level having a boys' school and a girls' school, including 6 schools from each area (3 boys' schools and 3 girls' school) and overall 12 schools were picked randomly from the list of all schools by experts on elementary education. In each elementary school one classroom was selected randomly from pre-schools, first grades, and second grades and questionnaires were given to the students and after their mothers answered the Internet addiction tests, intimacy tests and ADHD test, all the forms were gathered.

Research instrument

Young's Internet Addiction Test: this test was created in 1998 by Kimberly Young. It is designed in 20 phrases and is evaluated using five point Likert scale (1=barely, 2=sometimes, 3= often, 4=most of the time, 5=always). The minimum score obtained from this scale is 20 and the maximum is 100. According to obtained scores from this scale, people were grouped in three levels with scores from 20 to 49 interpreted as normal user, 50 to 79 scores as mild addiction and 80 to 100 as severe addiction. Scores varied from 20 to 80. Vidianto, has examined the validity and reliability of this scale. Statistical analyses showed the correlation coefficient between this grading and the Internet addiction test was 89%. For reliability of the test Cronbach's Alpha and Split-Half were used which were 0.97 and 0.97 respectively, which indicated the test's satisfactory reliability coefficient [5]. Alaviand et al, extracted five factors of spending too much time on the Internet, relief, using the Internet for mental peace, Ignoring educational and occupational duties, chatrooms abuse for their study of the Persian version of the test and achieved two types of content and differential validity ($r=0.5$) and three types of reliability using test-retest methods ($r=0.79$), internal consistency ($\alpha=0.88$) and bisection ($\alpha=0.82$) [12].

Walker and Thompson Intimacy Scale: This test has 17 questions which were designed by Walker and Thompson (1983) to measure love and intimacy. This scale was first conducted on 166 female undergraduate students with 68% of them being between 20 to 25 years old, 166 mothers of the middle class undergraduate students which were between 40 to 49 (63%) with 73% of them being in their first marriage, and 148 grandmothers which 40% of them were between 60 to 69 and 40% between 70 to 79, with 52% being married and 45% widowed. The mean level of intimacy was 6.21 for mothers and 6.04 for girls. The subject score in intimacy scale is obtained from adding up the questions' scores and dividing them by 17. The scores ranged from 1 to 7 and higher score means higher intimacy. This scale with the alpha coefficient of 0.91 to 0.97 has excellent internal consistency. This scale was translated by Santee in 2000. For content and face validity, the test was first checked by 15 counseling professors and 15 couples in Esfahan which were picked randomly and its content and face validity was approved. Then, the test was taken by 100 randomly picked couples in Esfahan. The reliability coefficient of the whole scale was obtained as 0.96 using Cronbach's Alpha, and showed the acceptable reliability of the test. The reliability coefficient when deleting individual questions showed that deleting any of the questions does not have any significant impact on the reliability coefficient [21].

Connors Test (parents' form): Connors and et al approved this test in 1999 and its reliability as 0.90. Iran's Institute of Cognitive Science has reported the credibility of this test as 0.85. In studies done in Iran by Khooshabi and et al, on 2667 children aged 7 to 12, using Pearson correlation method and Cronbach's Alpha, correlation of every question was evaluated against the whole test, and the credibility of the test was estimated $\alpha=0.93$; therefore, the test's high credibility can indicate that this tool measures ADHD's characteristics with great accuracy. This test has three versions with 93, 48, and 26 articles. The 26 article version has been used in this study. This version has been

prepared in 26 phrases and is evaluated using Likert Scale (1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=most of the times). With 26 questions, the test's total score ranges from 26 to 104 [22].

RESULTS

The data collected from this study were analyzed using inferential statistics (multiple regressions, Pearson correlation coefficient) and SPSS 20 software. Descriptive findings showed 52.9% of the participants were girls and the rest were boys. 19.8% of the participants were in pre-school, 40.1% in first grade, and 40.1% in second grade.

Analyzing study's hypotheses

Main hypothesis: There's a relation between mothers' amount of cyber use and their levels of intimacy and the severity of their children's hyperactivity.

Table 1: Mutual correlation between mothers' amount of cyber use and intimacy and their children's hyperactivity

Row	Variable	M	SD	Hyperactivity in children	Authorized user in mothers
1	Hyperactivity in children	45.33	12.27	0.16**	-0.30**
2	Authorized user in mothers	24.82	6.76	1	0.23**
3	Level of intimacy mothers	6.08	1.03	-	1

** $p < 0.01$

As can be seen in the above table, the amount of correlation between mothers' amount of cyber use and intimacy levels and the severity of children's hyperactivity is statistically significant ($p < 0.01$), in other words, there is a significant relationship between predictor and criterion variables and since the amount of correlation has been obtained from predictor variables of lower than 0.90, the linearity condition is not established and the predictor variables can directly distribute to predicting and explaining the criterion variable's variance.

Table 2: Variance analysis test of the prediction model's significance for the severity of hyperactivity based on mothers' amount of cyber use and their levels of intimacy.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2135.99	1	2135	14.69	.01
	Residual	55236.79	380	145.36		
	Total	57372.78	381			
2	Regression	2980.46	2	1490.23	10.38	.01
	Residual	54392.32	379	143.52		
	Total	57372.78	381			

As can be seen in the above table, in the last step the amount of correlation obtained is significant ($p < 0.01$), so this model has proceeded in four steps with significance and the main hypothesis is approved with 99% certainty, and we can conclude that there's a relation between mothers' amount of cyber use and their levels of intimacy and the severity of their children's hyperactivity. Predicting the severity of children's hyperactivity according to mothers' amount of cyber use and their levels of intimacy is statistically significant, and the predictor variables possess the ability to predict the criterion variable; thus we are allowed to analyze and report the regression's results.

According to the results in table 3, mothers' intimacy levels have affected the severity of children's hyperactivity inversely with a linear slope of -2.30. In other words, with a single unit increase in mothers' intimacy levels, the severity of children's hyperactivity decreases by 2.30 units. In the second model, mothers' intimacy levels with a linear slope of -1.96 and the amount of cyber use with a linear slope of 0.23 have affected the severity of children's hyperactivity inversely and directly respectively. In other words, with a single unit increase in mothers' intimacy levels, the severity of children's hyperactivity decreases by 1.96 units and with a single unit increase in the amount of cyber use, the severity of children's hyperactivity increases by 0.23 unit. Ultimately, mothers' intimacy levels and their amount of cyber use explain 5% of children's hyperactivity's variance.

Table 3: The summary of regression's results in the last step for predicting the severity of children's hyperactivity according to mothers' amount of cyber use and their levels of intimacy

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	59.30	3.70	----	16.05	.001
	Level of intimacy mothers	-2.30	0.60	-0.193	-3.83	.001
2	(Constant)	51.62	4.85	----	10.65	.001
	Level of intimacy mothers	-1.69	0.61	-0.165	-3.21	.001
	Authorized user in mothers	0.23	0,09	.125	2.43	.001

First alternative hypothesis: There is a relation between mother's amount of cyber use and the severity of her child's hyperactivity.

Table 4: Correlation between mothers' amount of cyber use and the severity of children's hyperactivity

Variable	Hyperactivity in children	
	R	Sig
Authorized user in mothers	0.16	.01
Level of intimacy mothers	-0.19	.01

As seen in table 4, there is a positive correlation ($r=0.16$) between mother's amount of cyber use and the severity of her child's hyperactivity which is statistically significant ($p<0.01$) and the first alternative hypothesis is approved with 99% certainty. Therefore we conclude that there's a relation between mother's amount of cyber use and the severity of her child's hyperactivity. In other words, it can be concluded that the mother's amount of cyber use increases with the severity of child's hyperactivity.

Second alternative hypothesis: There's a relation between mother's level of intimacy and the severity of her child's hyperactivity.

As seen in table 4, there's a negative correlation ($r=-0.19$) between mother's intimacy level and the severity of her child's hyperactivity which is statistically significant ($p<0.01$); therefore the second alternative hypothesis is approved with 99% certainty. In other words, it can be concluded that with an increase in mother's intimacy level, the severity of her child's hyperactivity decreases.

Third alternative hypothesis: There's a relation between mother's amount of cyber use and her level of intimacy

Table 5: The correlation between mother's amount of cyber use and her level of intimacy

Variable	Authorized user in mothers	
	R	Sig
Level of intimacy mothers	-0.23	.01

It is observed in this table that there's a negative correlation ($r=-0.23$) between mother's amount of cyber use and her level of intimacy, which is statistically significant ($p<0.01$), therefore with 99% certainty there's a relation between mother's amount of cyber use and her level of intimacy. In other words, it can be concluded that with an increase in mother's amount of cyber use, her level of intimacy decreases.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the study's main hypothesis on the possibility of a relation between mothers' amount of cyber use and their levels of intimacy and the severity of their children's hyperactivity, the results indicated that with regards to the gathered correlation values, there's a relation between mothers' amount of cyber use and their levels of intimacy and the severity of children's hyperactivity, and the predictor variables are able to predict the criterion variable. In other words, with increase in mother's amount of cyber use, the severity of her child's hyperactivity increases and with increase in mother's intimacy level, the severity of her child's hyperactivity decreases. Although less attention has been paid to ADHD due to behavioral or environmental factors, but some documents have focused on these factors and have identified ADHD with poor behavior drive because of parents' prohibitions which are rooted in dissimilar methods of child control. Since it appears that no similar studies have been done on the relation between mothers' amount of cyber use and their levels of intimacy and the severity of children's hyperactivity, and on the other hand the results of this study's main hypothesis show the effects of environmental and psychological factors on severity

of children's hyperactivity, in a comparative analysis, the results match those of the domestic and foreign studies. Alizadeh, showed in their study on interactions between parents and children with ADHD that these parents have much less warm relationship with their children [11]. Studies show that the excessive use of cyberspace causes isolation and depression which themselves can effect family relationships. As Hirshfeld, and et al reported in their studies, children of parents with major depressive disorder are much more likely to be diagnosed with major depressive disorder, general chaotic behavior disorder and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder²³. Studies indicate that cyber users visit their friends and families less and instead, communicate with them online, talk less with their family members and also when they're with them, they continue to be engaged to social networks. In this way, social networks have succeeded in affecting our family relationship's patterns. Technological developments have also played a big part in changing relationships between spouses and affecting our intimacy, which is known as a very important factor in developing family relationships. Of course intimacy' effect on spouses is not exclusive to them but it also includes children, who are influenced by this relationship. Although ADHD children's parents are not the main cause of this disorder, but with changing their behaviors toward their children, choosing appropriate strategies, and considering environmental and psychological factors in the family, they can be helpful in reducing the severity of children's hyperactivity. [12].

-In the first hypothesis, results indicate that there's a positive correlation between mother's amount of cyber use and the severity of her child's hyperactivity; in other words, with increase in mother's amount of cyber use, the severity of her child's hyperactivity also increases. Borjali *et al*, concluded in their study that in order to control and treat children with ADHD, along with drug therapy, there should be improvements in communicational and behavioral modes between parents and children diagnosed with the disorder [11]. Lotfi-e Kashani's et al, study showed that teaching parents behavioral principles is effective in reducing vexatious behaviors in hyperactive children¹⁵. Pisterman's et al, showed that changing parents' behavioral interactions is effective in improving pre-school hyperactive children's symptoms [17]. Anastapolos *et al*, stated that educating parents is much more common than any other family interventions. This hypothesis's conclusion is consistent with scientists' views [24]. Prominent scientists like Freud, Erikson, Bowlby, Piaget, Vygotsky, and Skinner believe that the child grows while interacting with the environment (although they have more or less different interpretations of interaction). The child's first interactions in the world are with his parents. Since the mother is the first one attending the child's needs and these first steps has definite effects on one's personality, and since most psychological problems are rooted in this interaction, mother and child interaction has been paid much attention to [11].

Findings in the second hypothesis show that there's a negative correlation between mother's intimacy level and the severity of her child's hyperactivity; in other words, with increase in mother's intimacy level, her child's hyperactivity decreases. Ghare Baghi, approved the role of marital conflict and parents' relationships with children as a prediction factor for behavioral and emotional psychopathological symptoms of children in his study. Studies on inside family interactions of children with ADHD show that sometimes there are problems in family members' relationships with each other [13]. JurilsArsen, found out in his study that parents' difference and incompatibility in child rearing leads to behavioral problems in the child [15]. Kerkum and Miguel, concluded that these kinds of children usually are born in unusual families and many psychological and communicational problems have been reported in these families [12]. Parents' relationship with each other has a great effect on children's development. Good communication between parents and a healthy relationship with children is the first and most important platform for children's moral and behavioral development. According to Bronfenbern, behavioral communication between couples is one the most important tools with which the environment of children's mental development is affected [17]. The results for the third hypothesis indicate that there's a negative correlation between mothers' amount of cyber use and their intimacy levels and with increase in mother's amount of cyber use, her intimacy level drops. Previous studies have focused mainly on the amount of cyber use's effect on people's mental health. Nevertheless, this hypothesis is consistent with some other studies. HezarJaribi *et al*, concluded that one effect of Internet addiction is that the addicted spends less time with his family [15]. Greenfield, found out that marriage and sex are areas most affected by internet addiction [4]. Krat *et al*, concluded that excessive use of the Internet is associated with reduced family relationships [18].

New ways of living life promoted by cyberspace have caused people' lives to turn more and more individualistic and with traditional relationships fading away, new conditions of life are before users. While these people's relationships increase in the online world, their domains of relationships in the real world get narrower. This can be one of the harmful effects of high amount of cyber use on couples' relationships. Among the limitations of the study is that for measuring the amount of cyber use, the only tool available was Internet Addiction Test with an acceptable validity and credibility. Another limitation was data collection. Since students took the tests home to their mothers, the researcher had no direct control on how the tests were taken. Research suggestions are, it is better for researchers to design tests for measuring the amount of cyber use and its effects on family life in both theoretical

and applicable aspects according to Iranian culture. Studies should be done on factors that lead to negative effects of high amount of cyber use in families and also on the effects of parents' intimacy or insincerity on other aspects of children's behaviors and personalities. Ultimately it is expected to identify the correct usage pattern for the online world, pay attention to its harms and make families aware of ways to prevent its possible damages and consequences. In addition, there should be training sessions for parents with ADHD diagnosed children, in order to raise their awareness about parents' roles and environmental and psychological factors that reduce this disorder's symptoms.

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