

Cold reflection on the phenomenon of Internet addiction among secondary school students: self-hiding and the awakening of needs

Weiming Long*

Department of Education, Guangxi Normal University, Guilin, Guangxi, China

Abstract: Internet addiction among adolescents is a critical mental health issue rooted in three dimensions: self-needs, family dynamics and boundary ambiguity. PCIMM model and Maslow's hierarchy reveal addiction as maladaptive coping when core needs—belonging, esteem, self-actualization—remain unmet offline. Solutions require dual approaches: Families must rebuild emotional bonds with clear boundaries, replacing control with supportive engagement. Students need guidance to differentiate virtual escapism from authentic needs, repurposing the internet as a tool rather than sanctuary. Evidence-based interventions include psychoeducation to cultivate real-world purpose, delayed gratification training, and group therapy to reshape social cognition. The antidote lies in strengthening real-life relational ecosystems. Only by anchoring adolescents' value systems in tangible growth—not digital proxies—can we catalyze sustainable behavioral shifts: from self-isolation to meaningful social integration.

Keywords: Middle school students, Internet addiction, PCIMM model

1. Exploring the Motives for Internet Addiction

1.1 Cognitive level

The Internet provides secondary school students with a wealth of information resources and facilitates students' rapid access to knowledge, processing and understanding of information. However, information on the Internet is usually fragmented and disorganised, and students tend to lose their way and confuse their thoughts during reading, which in turn leads to a decline in their ability to comprehend and analyse reading materials. While the Internet breaks the limitations of geography and time and enables friends from all over the country to communicate and interact with each other, students still face the gap and confusion between virtual and real socialising, which in turn may also bring about social anxiety and addiction problems.

1.2 Attitudinal level

Liking culture is a behaviour on social media that refers to users expressing their appreciation and recognition of others by clicking like or liking^[1]. Under the influence of the culture of likes, students may pursue vanity and recognition, hoping to obtain more likes and followers, and take these data as a measure of personal charisma and social competence, and invest a lot of time and energy, which may lead to anxiety and tension if things do not go as expected. When students become addicted to the Internet, they become overly dependent on the virtual world and use online socialising and Internet identity as a way to satisfy their social needs and self-expression.

1.3 Behavioural level

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The online world provides a broader platform that encourages students to generously display their imagination and creativity, and it also provides an avenue for students to develop technical and scientific literacy, such as skills in information searching, data analysis, and media creation. At the same time, a wide range of role models have been more widely disseminated through the Internet. At the same time, through the Internet, students can learn about different countries and cultures and broaden their global perspective.

2.The pitfalls of addiction: self-possession

2.1 Self-needed privatisation

The self-needs of secondary school students include the needs for self-development, emotional needs, social needs and so on. However, when secondary school students are addicted to the Internet, they may put most of their energy and time in the online world and neglect their self-needs in real life. The Internet provides colourful content and diversified entertainment, which can not only satisfy students' curiosity, desire for knowledge and entertainment needs, but also stimulate their curiosity and creativity by exploring the Internet world to satisfy their adventure and desire for new things.

2.2 Privatisation of kinship relations

When students are addicted to the Internet, they will not only reduce their communication and interaction with their family and friends, but also neglect the maintenance of interpersonal relationships in reality. Students' cyber addiction may lead them to conflict with the traditional values of their families. Families usually have some traditional values, such as respect for elders, focus on studies, and importance of family reunion, etc. Students' addiction to the Internet may lead them to ignore these traditional values, resulting in a conflict with the family's values. Some undesirable behaviours appear, such as indulging in undesirable Internet content, neglecting studies, disrespecting family members, and so on.

2.3 Privatisation of parental boundaries

With the popularity and development of the Internet, the problem of Internet addiction has become increasingly prominent. Teenagers are addicted to online games, social media and other virtual worlds, and this addiction may also have an impact on the issue of boundaries in parenting education. Unclear boundaries in parenting refers to the fact that parents, in the process of educating their children, over-emphasise their supervisory and controlling roles, neglect their children's self-development and self-decision-making abilities, and over-interfere with their children's thinking and behaviours, and may take extreme approaches, such as overly strict control of their children's behaviours, house arrest, and other methods, when solving their children's problems of online addiction, neglecting their children's emotional needs and space for growth, which may in turn lead to family conflicts and the emergence of children's rebelliousness^[2].

3.The Solution to Addiction: Demand Awakening

3.1 Mental reconstruction of Maslow's hierarchy of needs

3.1.1 Definition of PCIMM

Based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, with the multidimensional response theory of stress as the root, targeting at solving individual crisis problems as soon as possible, and using integrated intervention techniques as the means, PCIMM advocates to prioritise the solution of life-threatening, immediate, and easy-to-solve needs problems, and then to solve the deeper problems from nearer to farther away, and from deeper to deeper, and ultimately to help the crisis individuals to get rid of the crisis situation^[3]. The core of PCIMM is centred on the five levels of needs, and addresses the corresponding crises step by step, according to the order of priorities.

3.1.2 Psychological reconstruction of students addicted to the Internet

PCIMM is a multidimensional structure based on trust relationship, continuous evaluation, problem solving, and getting out of the immediate dilemma. The PCIMM consists of the four dimensions of cut-in, evaluation, problem, and goal.

First, entry: building family trust. Building a trust relationship should take the individual's most concerned problem as the entry point, focus on soothing their inner vulnerability, aim at obtaining their active participation, and use empathic techniques such as communication and understanding, listening, caring, encouragement and support as measures.

Second, assessment: targeting real-time problems. PCIMM's assessment emphasises rapidity, simplicity, and thoroughness, i.e., using the simplest methods to identify crisis problems in the shortest possible time, and continually reassessing to identify new problems as the intervention progresses. Parental restriction of their minor children's Internet use has a positive predictive effect on the latter's tendency to heavy Internet use, but the presence of parents' roles in their children's Internet use can enhance the science, positivity, and effectiveness of their restrictive behaviours, and reduce the likelihood of heavy Internet use among minors^[4].

Third, the problem: according to the priority to solve the problem. According to Maslow's theory, individual needs have a sequential order of progression, often low-level needs are met before the individual will aspire to a higher level of needs. pcimm is non-linear, non-step advancement, non-step decomposition type, is oriented to solve the crisis problem, the priority level of the fundamental chaos model. Parents need to help their children to build self-esteem, cultivate a positive and healthy self-image, learn to deal with unhealthy external evaluations, and develop self-confidence^[5].

Fourth, the goal: to get rid of the addiction problem as soon as possible. The dilemma faced by individuals in crisis is often the depletion of internal resources and the lack of external resources, previous experience or coping methods are difficult to solve the current problem, feel powerless and pessimistic interveners should help individuals in crisis to activate the internal motivation, explore appropriate ways of coping to restore the psychological balance.

3.2 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs - The Emotional Effect Uncovered

3.2.1 Self-emotional Exploration

In the process of self-emotional exploration should make children aware of the importance of the self, and cultivate the ability of self-observation, self-analysis and self-solution. Students can pay attention to their emotional changes when they use the Internet, what kind of emotions do they feel after using the Internet for a long time?

3.2.2 Other People's Emotional Exploration

First of all, students should try to express their feelings and needs to their parents so that they can understand their inner world, and at the same time learn to make an effort to listen to their parents' views and opinions. Secondly, students should learn positive emotion management to help them deal with their emotions well, increase their resilience and reduce their dependence on the internet. Finally, students should cultivate their own hobbies and interests, and find their own favourite activities.

4. Conclusion

In today's society, the phenomenon of Internet addiction among secondary school students has become a serious problem. We have to admit that the convenience and attraction of the Internet have plunged many students into an untenable situation, affecting their learning and healthy development. Finally, it is important to note that excessive intervention and control may be counterproductive in addressing the problem of Internet addiction among students. Intervenors should respect students' right to make their own choices and develop their personalities, while at the same

time enhancing communication and understanding and building a relationship of mutual trust.

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