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Social Loneliness and Awaiting Danger for Europe: Anders Behring Breivik's Case

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Abstract

Humans are defined as social beings. Therefore, being a human being requires living in a social circle. That the human is a social being, living in a social atmosphere, naturally placessocial relationships at the center of his/her life. Humans want to feel that they belong somewhere or to a group. This sense of belonging is one of the main factors that helps a person hold on to life. While some people are good at building relationships in their social circle they have formed, others are not equally as good. People in the second group, in other words, those who are socially lonely, accept loneliness as their fate and try to meet their social needs in different ways. Social loneliness is a complex emotion which is a combination of different emotions. The socially lonely see themselves segregated from social life and do not trust other people. Researches have established that internet use in socially lonely individuals is at an addiction level, which might lead to further psychological and physical disorders. Another result is that the users in question are usually made up of young people. Internet addiction reappeared on the agenda when a 32-year old Norwegian Anders Behring, killed 77 people on Utoya Island, Norway, on June 22, 2011. It was established that Breivik was a highly active and intense user of the websites of Facebook and Twitter, called *"social networks"* and had 7000 "friends" on Facebook alone. Assumptions started to be voiced that European youths who experience social loneliness try to meet this need in the cyber world, thus getting more isolated from the real world resulting in search for the extreme. Based on the Breivik example, this study will try to explore the relationship between social loneliness and internet addiction, pointing out the extreme dangers, such as terrorism, which can be caused by psychological and physical disorders as a result of internet addiction.

INTRODUCTION

Humans, as social animals have certain needs. These needs can be categorized into two groups: physical and social. After meeting the physical needs, which are the most important, people expect that their social needs, such as the provision of their security and self-realization are satisfied. When their physical and social needs are satisfied, people become happier and build good relationships within their own environment, thus holding onto life. In the opposite cases, the individual doesn't enjoy life; therefore life means nothing to the individual. The individual tries to replace his life by himself, in his world, that is short of a meaning.

The 21st century is called the age of space by some and the age of technology by others. However different these names are, there is one prevailing rule for the 21st century, namely, the fact that it is a competition-based one. The main philosophy of our current age is expressed as "win, win, win". This inevitably results in ruthless competition. People of this age keep studying how to obtain more efficiency in the shortest time in order to adapt to the competitive conditions that increasingly dominate our daily lives. Consequently, technology is developing on a daily basis, bringing new conveniences to people's lives. Distances have disappeared thanks to the convenience of technology and time has started to be used more efficiently. The amount of work performed in a unit of time has increased and production has increased exponentially. Daily living quality has improved and now it is as if technology is the only factor that has a say at every step and level of life. One of the most recent innovations introduced by technology for human beings is the internet. The internet is technically a world-wide popular and ever-growing communication network to which a number of computers and systems of computer are connected. People can now pay for their electricity, water, natural gas bills, use online banking, have voice and video calls, get an appointment for social services and follow them up, which in short boils down to the possibility of doing almost anything that is life related online. The internet has now become indispensable as it has penetrated into our lives so deeply making things so much easier for us, that in turn it has condemned us to it. The excessive and pointless use of internet, which was initially invented to be put at the service of humans, has now taken them captive. The Internet that is a part of almost every house is now in the position of an essential friend for the youth of today. Even though the internet seemingly lessens the loneliness somewhat, it encourages people to turn antisocial. As a result of spending more time in the cyber world, people lose touch with the real world and create a kind of new world for themselves. Individuals, who fail in their social relationships in the real world, act with more ease in the cyber world, becoming better at cyber relationships they have forged in this world. The individual who sees that what cannot be done in the real world, may be done in the cyber world, now starts to think of the internet and their fictional life online as the essential part of their world. Additionally, these types of individuals may have emotional shares in the cyber world and establish emotional cyber relationships. These emotional relationships, which are completely out of touch with the reality, turn the individuals into internet addicts, affecting them both physically and psychologically. Today, internet addiction is recognized as a psychological disorder. The topic re-appeared on the agenda following the shooting of 77 people on Utoya Island by a 32-year old Anders Behring Breivik in Norway on July 22, 2011. One of the most important factors in the re-appearance of this topic on the agenda was that Breivik was an internet addict and even though he had 7000 friends on Facebook, he was socially lonely.

I. SOCIAL LONELINESS

The human was created as a social being. Being a social being, the human is required to build relationships with his environment. As he realizes material shares in this circle of relationships, he also feels the obligation to realize spiritual shares. The environment, in which he shares all, forms his social environment. Social environment supports the individual

when his strength is spiritually exhausted and keeps him "on his feet". Therefore, individuals who have healthy social relationships, cope better when they face problems with life better than ones with bad social relationships.

The oldest publication on loneliness is the work of Zimmermann(Zimmermann,1785) named "Über die Einsamkeit". Efforts to place the concept of loneliness on a scientific base started with the publication of Fromm Reicmann's work "Loneliness" in the 1950's(Gierveld 2006); the period between these works, spanning one and a half centuries. In fact, Zimmermann handled the the subject of loneliness at a time when the concept had little or no consideration within the community in terms of being important to the structure of the community. Experimental studies into loneliness were supported with the efforts of Perlman and Peplau. Perlman and Peplau(1981) defined loneliness as an undesirable situation that takes place when an individual is qualitatively or quantitatively insufficient in terms of some of the important aspects of a social relationships network in the empirical research they had conducted.

A state of a lack of social relationships is called loneliness. What should be concluded of this description of loneliness is not the state of being away from people but an individual feeling lonely in crowds. Loneliness is described as an undesired and unpleasant experience, dominated by feelings of anxiety, anger, sorrow, and the sense of feeling oneself different from others, which are almost always avoided by people and contrary to the popular belief, it is the name of a mental state that is more common in adolescents and young adults than the older ones (DiTommaso & Spinner, 1997). Weiss(1973) describes loneliness as a lack of social relationships a person needs or despite having social relationships, a lack of intimacy, sincerity, and emotionality in these relationships. Weiss' description of loneliness can also be called as being lonely in crowds. Weiss categorizes loneliness theoretically into emotional and social loneliness, stating that; emotional loneliness is related with family, special friends and relationships while social loneliness is connected with friendships in social circles. An individual working in an office having lunches by himself, while the others have lunch together, can be given as an example of this. This individual may have very good family relationships but he might be seen as socially lonely in his office because an office is a social environment for this individual and he cannot share anything within it. Based on the loneliness definitions of Perlman and Peplau, one can conclude that loneliness is a state to which one is forced, though undesired. The example of an individual working in an office, who cannot initiate any dialogue with others in the office, might make friends with the cleaning personnel, although not very willingly. In other words, loneliness is a result of a scarcity of discreet relationships. As this includes cases when the current relationships are fewer than desired or expected, it might also include a case when an individual with an expectation of intimacy cannot have his need met (De Jong Gierveld, 1987). In both definitions, loneliness is seen as a negative emotion that appears as a result of social relationships that cannot be reached and obtained. If a generalization is to be made based on these given definitions, loneliness is a subjective, undesired, and negative emotion. Loneliness differs from person to person and underlying state to state, so it is subjective. Loneliness is undesired. Loneliness is not a choice people make willingly and consciously. They are forced to become/stay lonely as a result of their personality. Loneliness is a negative emotion. According to a common view, loneliness is a mental state only seen in people at older ages. However, researches prove the opposite. Loneliness is a general state experienced at least sometimes by individuals 80% of which are below the age of 18 and 40% above the age of 65(Berguno,Leroux,McAinsh & Shaikh, 2004).

II. INTERNET AND INTERNET ADDICTION

The head-spinning advancement of technology brings new phenomena to our social lives on a daily basis. One of these phenomena is the internet. Internet is the name given to the sum of networks designed to serve the human needs of research and improved communication. In parallel with the fast development observed in computer and communication technologies, the position of internet in people's daily needs such as working, shopping, making payments,

communication, education and fun, increases gradually. Computers, which are one of the essential parts of today's world, have become cheaper due to the free market economy and have become an integral part of people's daily lives (Canbek & Sağıroğlu,2007). Let's take the USA as an example. While the rate of houses with a computer was 8% in 1984, it increased to 51% in 2000(Li & Atkins, 2004). Furthermore, in Norway, a Baltic country, while the use of internet was 3% in 1996, in 2002 it climbed to 72%(Johansson Götestam, 2004). The number of internet users even in China, where the control is tighter since it is a communist country, shows an increase. According to China Internet Network Information Center (CINIC) 2005 data, about 103 million people use internet in China and 16% of them are made up of youths below the age of 18(Cao &Sue, 2006). Given the internet use rate across the world, the number of internet users increased in a surprising manner. The world population was estimated to be 6.930.055.154 on the March 31st, 2011 dated statistics, and the number of internet users in this population was established to be 2.095.006.005. Compared with the December 2000 data, the number of internet users across the world showed an increase of 480.4% between the years 2000-2011. The most prominent increases in the given statistics are respectively in Africa with 2,527.4%, Middle East with 1,987.0% and Latin America with 1,037.4%(Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2012). As understood from this statistics, internet use across the world has shown an increase at an incredible pace. Huge increases in the developing countries in particular are an important indicator for potential dangers these countries might face in the future. This points to the necessity of handling the internet subject scientifically, one more time.

The fact that internet is such a big part of our lives has led to several studies. In the study conducted by Madell and Muncer (2004) on 1340 secondary school students aged between 11–16, while 67% of the students say they use internet to listen to music, 56% to surf and 55% to check their emails, only a portion as small as 28% say they used internet to access information(Madell & Muncer, 2004).

2002 Turkey Informatics Council states that 90% of youths aged 15 use internet for fun and surfing websites that are not useful and waste their time in front of the computer. Additionally, according to the same report, the majority of youths who don't receive education and are economically in a poor situation spend the money in cyber cafes or coffee houses (Turan, 2008). As the rate of internet use by youths increases day by day, so does the rate of being affected by it. The excess, uncontrolled, and senseless abuse of internet, are assumed to affect the personal skills negatively(Kerberg, 2005). Use of internet being popular among the younger generations in particular, opened the quality of the internet use to discussion. Studies have provided criteria for healthy use of internet. Use of internet by those who do not meet these criteria is declared as unhealthy internet use. Davis (2001) defines the healthy internet use as the use of internet by the individual without feeling trouble, at his convenience in order to reach the goal he set. Davis' definition of healthy internet use reveals that the individuals turn all the conditions to their advantage and use the internet in line with self-planned objectives. The unhealthy internet use is when the internet use poses psychological, social, and cognitive difficulties for the individual, firstly in his life and then in his circle's life (Davis, 2001). In other words, it is when the internet takes over the place of parents, friends, neighbors and relatives, in short, the current social circle. The excess use of internet affects both the academic and personal development of the individual negatively, causing problems in health, communication and time management which may turn the person into an addict. When the high school and university youth prefers internet over building social relations with both the same and opposite sex, it may prevent them from developing social skills. It is probable for the youth who cannot develop their social skills in a natural social environment, to face communication problems in the future periods of his life, especially in a school, family, or work environment. This situation might lead to the individual experiencing a lack of social relationships, deteriorating wellbeing and getting progressively lonelier.

Another subject emphasized by the research is the fact that the excess use of internet looks like other addictions, and playing video games and using internet excessively creates a new kind of addiction (Kubey,Lavin &Barrows, 2001). Internet addiction is defined as a problem of spending too much time by the computer connected to internet. It is further stated

that internet, just like gambling and other games of chance leads to addiction and brings along depressive tendencies as well as health problems and sleep deprivation(Young, 1997). Problematic internet use is a multidimensional syndrome resulting from cognitive and behavioural symptoms which lead to social, academically/professional negative results (Caplan, 2005). Research on the subject has confirmed that the youth who spends most of his time in front of a computer, experience grave problems in interpersonal relationships (Suhail & Bargees, 2006). Other research on the same subject has claimed that children and youths who spend too much time online become lonelier and shy away from building face to face relationships with other people (Kraut, Patterson, Lundmark, Kiesler, Mukophadhyay & Scherlis, 1998). It is seen that as the time spent on internet increases, emotional and behavioural problems such as social loneliness, exclusion, and aggression in children and youths are observed more, and correspondingly, their general level of health drops and depressive symptoms start to appear(Andersson & Bushman, 2001). The same results were obtained from a study conducted on university students for the same purpose. This study observed that the students using internet for 3.84 hours or less in a week were more successful than those using internet more than for 11.18 hours in a week(Kubey, Lavin & Barrows *ibid*). Young (1996) has established in his research that 58% of students experienced a noticeable fall in their studying habits, their grades, and attendance to school due to excess use of internet. This research conducted by Young has revealed that internet use addiction is distinctly related with social, psychological, and professional damage (Griffiths, 1997). As a result of the studies on internet users, researchers have established that excess use of internet keeps the student away from *"real life"* and harms their ability to cope with the difficulties they face (Morgan & Cotten, 2003). In other words, school, family, and friend's interaction required for the child's development in a full state of wellbeing is replaced by electronic friendship and this, in turn, affects creating and maintaining interpersonal relationships negatively. There is a direct relationship between a problematic internet use and depression, social isolation, loneliness and decrease in home/school/job performance (Caplan, 2002). Furthermore, it is also stressed that communication built in the cyber world is much more important; computer games and internet replace the child and youth's friends which can lead them to experience social loneliness (Gross, 2004). As a natural result of this situation, as the time spent on internet increases, the users get into less and less relationships with people in social life which results in social loneliness.

III. SOCIAL LONELINESS AND INTERNET ADDICTION

Individuals who have difficulty in building face to face social relationships in daily life prefer to build relations in the cyber world. The reason is that people whose social skills are not fully developed do not have to speak with anyone face to face in the cyber world and can hide their emotions easily. As lonely and bored individuals see online communication as the "Prozac of social communication" (Morahan, Martin & Schumacher, 2000), they prefer online communication more. Since names are hidden or nicknames are used on online communication, it is relatively a lot easier than face to face communication. In research conducted on this subject, it was suggested by Caplan (2007) and La Rose (2003) that states such as loneliness and depression known as psycho-social function disorders result in problematic internet use causing addiction. According to this model developed by Caplan and La Rose, individuals who do not have sufficient skills to express themselves might prefer online communication over face to face communication. As these types of individuals sacrifice most of their time and attention to online social interaction, some of them have difficulties in arranging their time spent on internet; this is called involuntary internet use. Hence, after some time, this results in the individual turning into an addicted internet user without being aware at all. In this successive chain of events, the individual finds himself on the margins of life involuntarily. Uncontrolled internet use brings about consequences such as lower school grades, lack of attendance at school or at work and losses in common subjects agreed in social life respectively. If we are to express this as a circle;
a- Poor social skills would be related with preferring online interaction,

b- Preferring online interaction would be related with uncontrolled and involuntary internet use,

c- Uncontrolled and involuntary internet use would be related with adverse living consequences (Kim, La Rose & Peng, 2009). As the individual who finds the solution to his failure in social life on the internet begins to use the internet at an addiction level, negativities would be coming along one after another. The reason is that the individual, who has gone through certain phases, now starts something which is very difficult to rewind. From now on the individual is an *"Internet Addict"*.

The term *"Internet Addiction"* was termed by Dr. Ivan Goldberg in order to express the use of internet at a level of illness and in an uncontrolled manner. Accurate diagnosis of internet addiction is difficult due to the lack of criteria recognized for internet addiction and listed on DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1995). Therefore other disorders that are closest to internet use in terms of its symptoms were searched. Gambling at an illness level among the diagnosis mentioned on DSM-IV has been considered the closest to the nature of internet use at an addiction level. Young (1996) who took gambling at an illness level as a model defined the internet use at an illness level as an intoxicant-free *impulse control disorder*. Internet addiction is defined as being psychologically internet-dependent and is characterized by incremental resource investment in internet-related activities, unpleasant feelings when offline, increasing tolerance when online and denial of problematic behaviours (Shields & Behrman, 2000). A study conducted in India by Nalwa and Anand (2003) suggested that 33% of Indian students aged between 16-19 use the internet for more than two hours a day and this 33% group in question creates a risky group for internet addiction, and when compared to the non-addicts they are socially more isolated. Niemz and his colleagues (2005) who conducted a similar study stated that 10-14 hours of internet use a week is pathological. This study pointed out to the fact that those defined as internet addicts have low self-esteem and limited social relations. However, as this might be the result of an addiction, it can also be its cause. As both studies suggest, social loneliness causes internet addiction over time or when normal individuals reach the stage of addiction in internet use they automatically become socially lonely. Therefore, there is a constant circle between social loneliness and internet addiction.

IV. THE CASE OF ANDRES BEHRING BREIVIK

The world's public heard the name of Andres Behring Breivik when he raided the youth camp of the opposition political party that gathered on Utoya Island, located in the capital of Norway, killing 77 people on June 22nd, 2011. The world's public initially announced the incident basing it on a possibility of a terrorist attack. As time progressed, it was revealed that there hadn't been any group behind the incident and Breivik had long been planning this incident. It was mentioned that this incident was connected with Islamphobia, which was shaped by Samuel Huntington's thesis on the Clash of Civilizations and later the shady 9/11 incident. Sociologists came up with a wide number of thesis ranging from the future of the European Union to racism. Following sociologists and terror experts, psychologists started to occupy the TV screens. It was as if every psychologist that appeared on TV showed off all their skills in order to prove that Breivik was a psychopath and mad. Interviews were held with his mother and sister and a drama of a fallen family divided into several comments was added on top, shifting the focus of the incident. Even the Norwegian psychiatrics told that he was a paranoid schizophrenic. Actually almost everything that had been said about the Breivik Case was correct, to some extent. However, there was another side to the story that could not be seen. Breivik was an internet addict experiencing social loneliness in crowds.

It is possible to find clues when we study Breivik's character. Breivik was born in London on February 13, 1979 to a diplomat father. He did not experience any poverty in his life. In other words, he led a life that people would love to have. Breivik doesn't have any criminal record either. Thus, all the available information focuses on the possibility that it was not likely that Breivik would have committed the given crime.

Given Breivik's life, it is seen that he was socially lonely. The reason is that even though he could easily express his feelings on the internet, he is defined as introvert and antisocial by his

friends (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-14259989). On the other hand, Norwegian scientist and terror expert Lars Buehler who met Breivik on the internet used the following description for him: "he was quite an aggressive and offensive person on the internet". These two contrary opinions are actually the definition of a socially lonely individual. What Breivik told the court "I protected Norway and Western Europe from cultural Marxism and Islam" is an example of what kind of a cyber-world Breivik was living in. It is seen that Breivik was a constant user of Facebook and Twitter, having a considerable number of followers.

CONCLUSION

As technology has become widespread, computers play an important place in the world of children and youths. Especially in developing and developed countries, computers have become the best friends of youths who spend most of their time at home or at school. While computer and internet as a criterion of development and civilization facilitate people's lives and contribute positively to the social development, they also bring along several problems and dangers due to unconscious use. Uncontrolled internet use may influence physical, psychological, social, and cognitive development of children negatively.

Legal regulations to protect the youth from this information bombardment that could influence their future psychological lives negatively have yet to be put in place in any country. It is also known that some online games cause youths to become more aggressive, drifting away from life, make them more pessimistic. Experimental studies suggest that after playing computer games there are considerable decreases in altruist behaviors of youth and in their wish to help. There are also increases in their replying to aggressive ideas and provocative actions with violence. Being exposed to violence in computer games leads to a stronger violence advocacy and decrease in empathy. Desensitization increases in parallel with a strong advocacy for violence and decrease in empathy. As violent acts are regularly awarded in violent computer games and due to the increasing desensitization, moral valuation does not take place (Funk, Elliott, Bechtoldt, Pasold & Tsavoussis, 2003). Furthermore, youths play games for a long time to increase their score and get to the higher levels. It is claimed that this type of repetition increases the influence of violence. It has also been revealed that youth's who play computer games outside display more aggressive behaviour than those who play computer games at home.

There is also a relationship between playing computer games too much with rebellion and disobedience (Bensley & Eenwyk, 2001). The case of Breivik is a good example. Conditions such as anxiety and fear, tendency to violence, sudden frustration and trivializing violence are observed in youths who have long been exposed to violent images. Taking cautions against violent games with a potential to cause emotional and mental deformation in youth is a social responsibility (Gümüşoğlu, 2006).

In an effort to make sure children and youth benefit from computers and internet opportunities in a proper, active and efficient manner, their security should always be prioritized. Therefore, it is necessary for the relevant state institutions to focus more on the subject, giving educators and parents knowledge on the subject, whilst children and youth are educated and evaluated (Canbek & Sağıroğlu, 2007).

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