The Internet Addiction and Related Factors among Students of Yazd Universities

Seyyed Saeid Mazloomy Mahmoudabad[1], Mohammad Hassan Lotfi[2], Nahid Ardian[3]*, Sajad Saleh Manshadi [4], Soheila Bazm[5]

Abstract

Aim: Nowadays, the Internet is considered as an appropriate means of transferring knowledge in education and research processes. However, overusing the Internet may cause addiction. This problem may increase as the Internet usage increases. This paper attempted to study the Internet addiction among the students of Yazd universities.

Methods: This research was a cross-sectional study conducted among 238 students of Yazd University Medical Sciences and 245 students of Yazd Payam-e-Noor University.
The data were collected using the Internet Addiction Questionnaire introduced by Young. To analyze data, several statistical operations were conducted, including mean, percentage, Chi-square, Spearman's correlation coefficient, Chi-two, and linear regression.

Findings: Among the addicted students, 51% were from Payam-e-Noor University and 49% were from the University of Medical Sciences. Descriptive statistics also revealed that 51% of the addicted students were female and 67% of them were unmarried. Getting news and using e-mail services were mostly reported the Internet usages.

Conclusion: Comparing with the previous studies, the Internet addiction has increased among the students of Yazd universities. This problem needs more concise investigation, and educational and counseling planning to reduce the Internet abuse.

Keywords: Internet addiction, Students, Young's the Internet Addition Questionnaire

1. Professor, Social Determinants of Health Research Center, Shahid Sadoughi University of Medical Sciences, Yazd, Iran
Email: mazloomy@ssu.ac.ir
2. Professor, Social Determinants of Health Research Center, Shahid Sadoughi University of Medical Sciences, Yazd, Iran
Email: m_h_lotfi@yahoo.com
3. Ph.D. Student in Research, Research Center for Health Services Management, Institute of Futures Studies in Health, Kerman University of Medical Sciences, Kerman, Iran   Email: n_ardian1382@hotmail.com
4. Student Mechanical, University of Science and Arts, Yazd, Iran
Email: sajad saleh@yahoo.com
5. Social Determinants of Health Research Center , Shahid Sadoughi University of Medical Sciences, Yazd, Iran
Email: soheila.bazm@gmail.com

Introduction

The increasing effects of online communication devices, particularly the Internet, are one of the most important aspects of the modern society among people [1]. The internet overuse is seen in different cultures, and the young people, more than others, are in danger [2]. The noticeable role of the Internet in developing sciences and communication is undeniable, besides it has been very useful to its users. The Internet users are more creative and self-efficient, comparing to those who do not use it [3]. As results of the studies done in the United States showed, the youth used the Internet more than other age groups [4]. Similarly, according to the recent research in Iran, most of the Internet users are among the young people [5]. Dell believes that like other technologies, the Internet causes to physical laziness, increased kamtaharoki, reduced attempts to communicate with others, and finally, lead to social isolation [6]. Increased overuse of the Internet during the recent years resulted in a new phenomenon called the "Internet Addiction" [7]. Different societies are engaged with the Internet addiction as a problem. Internet addiction is a term that refers to the users who overuse and misuse the Internet [8]. Moreover, this term reflects the physical and mental dependence of those users on the Internet, similar to drug addicts [9].

Internet addiction is considered as a disorder in which the user sees the computer world more interesting than the real daily life. Although it seems that all computer users are subjected to addiction, those who are shy, depressed, alone, and bored, especially quitted addicts, are more vulnerable to the Internet addiction [10].

The term "Internet Addiction" was first introduced in a pilot study by Young in 1994. Young believed that the word "addicts" could be used for people who misuse and overuse the Internet. Internet addiction is similar to other types of addiction. According to Young, an Internet addict has the similar symptoms of alcohol and cigar addicts [8].

Ghsemzadeh found that addicted users of the Internet have less self-confidence, comparing to those who do not use the Internet or use it normally [11]. Another study revealed that Internet addicts were alone, shy, secluded, and depressed individuals [9].

Based on Young, the literature on the Internet addiction confirmed that it was related to serious damages in personal, social and occupational performance of the individuals [12]. Another study indicated that those who used the Internet for a long time, may suffer interpersonal, social and educational problems [13]. Development and pervasiveness of the Internet within Iranian society may depend on various background and environmental

variables. Entering universities, students will learn more about computer and have more opportunity to use the Internet, particularly because they are far from their families and there are limited recreation facilities available. Overusing the Internet increases the possibility of Internet addiction, which can have negative effects on their physical and mental health, and also on their educational achievements. Therefore, this paper aimed at investigating the level of Internet addiction and some related factors among the students who reside in the dormitories of Shahid Sadoughi University of Medical Sciences and Payam-e-Noor University in Yazd.

Methodology

This is a descriptive, cross-sectional study, which was conducted in 2013. The sample population were the university students of Shahid Sadoughi University of Medical Sciences and Payam-e-Noor University in Yazd.

Based on the number of departments at the University of Medical Sciences, 250 students were supposed to be selected. Then concerning the classes in each department, several classes were selected using random cluster sampling. All of the students in those classes filled in the questionnaire. Since it was not required to attend in the classes of Payam-e Noor University, 250 students, whose number was supposed to be the appropriate sample size, were asked to complete the questionnaire using availability sampling.

It was also taken into account that they should have been using the Internet at least once per week for the recent 6 months.

To be ethical, those who were volunteers filled the questionnaire. Ensuring them to remain anonymous and keep their information confidential, the selected students participated in the study. Moreover, the topic of study and the questionnaire were accepted by the Ethical Committee of Shahid Sadoughi University of Medical Sciences.

To collect data about Internet addiction, the standard questionnaire of Internet Addiction Test designed by Young was used. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire in Iran were confirmed by Alavi [5]. The translated version of the questionnaire was confirmed by Ghasemzadeh and Nasti Zaei, and its internal reliability was estimated by Cronbach's alpha to be .85 and .81, respectively [11, 14].

In this study, to estimate the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha was calculated. 30 students were selected, and after filling the questionnaire and analyzing the data, the reliability was confirmed by a Cronbach's alpha of .88.

This questionnaire consisted of 20 items with a 6-point Likert scale. The scores below 50 represented normal users, and the scores equal to 50 or more represented addicted users. This cut point was seen in other studies [5, 9, 15]. Data were analyzed using SPSS16. The results at the level of p<.05 were considered as significant. Several statistical operations were conducted, including T-test, Spearman's correlation coefficient, Chi-two, and linear regression.

Results

In this study, 483 out of the 500 students who lived in the dormitories of Shahid Sadoughi University of Medical Sciences and of Payam-e-Noor University in Yazd filled the questionnaire. 238 students were from Payam-e Noor University and 245 students were from Shahid Sadoughi University of Medical Sciences. Among the students of Payam- Noor University, 92 (46.5%) were normal users and 146 (51.2%) were addicted users, and in Shahid Sadoughi University, 106 (53.5 were normal users and 139 (48.8%) were addicted users. The results revealed that although the difference between the normal and addicted students in these universities was not significant, the number of addicted users who study at Payam-Noor University was relatively more. Among the Internet addicted students, 146 (51%) were from Payam-e Noor University and the other 92 (49%) were from the University of Medical Sciences. The mean age of users of Payam-e Noor and Shahid Sadoughi universities was 27.77 $\pm$ 6.16 and 22.57 $\pm$ 2.69, respectively. Among the addicted users, 145 (51%) were females and 140 (49%) were males. Also among them, 94 (33%) were married and 190 (67%) were single students. The Internet related skills of 212 Internet addicted students were elementary. The connecting hours of addicted students of these two universities showed a significant difference (P=.03), that is, 40% of Payam- Noor students and 51% of Shahid Sadoughi Students reported less than one hour Internet connection.

There was no significant relationship between sex and age and using the Internet addicted. There was no significant relationship between using the Internet addicted and other variables such as occupational status, kind of university, educational level, the Internet connection hours, place of the Internet connection, and the Internet skills.

According to linear regression, sex had the most effects on using the Internet (sig.=.017, B=7.106).

Table 1: The number and percentage of normal and addicted Internet users based on their universities and other demographic characteristics

Variables		Internet addict		Non-Internet addict		P-value
		N	%*	N	%*	
University	Payamenoor	146	51.2	92	46.5	0.303
	Medical Sciences	139	48.8	106	53.5	
Sex	Male	140	49.1	112	56.6	0.107
	Female	145	50.9	86	43.4	
Marital statue	Married	94	33.1	66	33.3	0.238
	Single	190	66.9	130	65.7	
Age	<22 years	101	35.4	76	38.4	0.662
	22-27 years	124	43.5	78	39.4	
	>27 years	60	21.1	44	22.2	
Educational level	Undergraduate students	200	70.2	139	70.2	0.680
	Postgraduate students	77	27.0	52	26.3	
	Ph.D. candidate	7	2.5	6	3.0	
Occupation	Employed	65	22.8	50	25.3	0.821
	Part-time job	47	16.5	31	15.7	
	Student	173	60.7	117	59.1	
Types of the Internet usage	Email	173	59.0	120	41.0	0.983
	News	111	60.7	72	39.3	0.565
	Film& music	61	54.5	51	45.5	0.265
	Game	26	52.0	24	48.0	0.287
	Sciences	151	58.5	107	41.5	0.819
	Chat	69	54.3	58	45.7	0.212
The place of the Internet connection	Dormitory	157	56.9	119	43.1	0.274
	University	80	55.9	63	44.1	0.375
	Cafe net	26	53.1	23	46.9	0.479
	Office	38	58.5	27	41.5	0.924
	Home	110	55.0	90	45.0	0.142
Connection hours	<1	129	45.3	88	44.7	0.063
	1-2	108	37.9	91	46.2	
	>2	47	16.5	18	9.1	
The Internet skills	Unskilled	15	5.3	14	7.1	0.509
	Elementary	212	74.4	151	76.6	
	Advanced	57	20.0	32	16.2	

N* Unequal relates to missing some items

Discussion

The results of this study showed that 59% of the university students in Yazd, based on the proposed cut point, are among the Internet addicted users, which showed a larger population compare to previous studie [5, 9, 16, 17]. It should be considered that one of the reasons for this contradiction is the difference in the research times. It seems that as the time passes and mass media develop, using the Internet and, consequently, the Internet addiction increase.

To compare two universities under investigation, the addicted users were mostly among the students of Payam-e Noor University; which needs more investigation to

find the reasons behind this finding.

Like some studies, this study did not find a significant difference between the two sexes among the normal and addicted users [18]. However, the addicted users were more females than males. Similar results have been shown in other studies [17]. In some other studies, the addicted users were mostly among males [4-16, 18]. Probably, these differences result from cultural differences in terms of using the Internet in different societies. Using the Internet also depends on other issues such as the limited opportunities available for females to do entertainment and recreation activities. This situation is even worse in the cities like Yazd, which is mostly placed in a desert and has less recreation potential. It may encourage the youth to use the Internet as a hobby. The predictors were also analyzed in this paper, which revealed that sex is the strongest predictor of the Internet addiction, similar to other studies [15, 19].

There was a significant and positive correlation between age and the Internet addiction of students. Since the mean age of Payam-Noor University students was more than the students of Shahid Sadoughi University, the age range of this study was relatively broad. Despite the significant correlation between age and the Internet addiction, some other studies have found a significant and negative correlation between

these variables [17]. Similar to Alavi, it was revealed that there was no significant relationship between marital status and the Internet addiction [5]. However, most of the addicted users were unmarried students. Similar result has been also shown in other studies [5, 15]. The more free times available for single students resulted in more time spending on the Internet.

The results also indicated that there was no significant relationship between the educational level and the Internet usage among the normal and addicted Internet users; this is similar to others' findings [5, 15]. However, some researchers found this correlation as significant [9]. In spite of that, most of the addicted users were undergraduate students [15, 17]. We can say that because of the new teaching- and research-based approaches applied at universities, using the Internet sources are inevitable for all educational levels. However, it seemed that most of the users in our study had been using the Internet for non-academic reasons. Therefore, undergraduate students had used the Internet more than others because they had more free times.

This paper, similar to other studies, showed that among the addicted users, a few had permanent jobs, and most of them were unemployed [15]. It seemed logical that a side job besides the studies leaves less time to use

the Internet, and consequently, leads to less Internet addition among the university students.

The internet was used mostly to get the news and send or receive e-mails, and scientific use was after these. Some other studies reported that the Internet users mostly play Internet games and, at the second place, use e-mail services [15, 19, 20]. It seemed that because of the existing political and social atmosphere, the university students prefer the news and e-mail connections to different types of Internet games. They tried to receive the news through various and cheaper sources such as those in the Internet.

After news and e-mail connections, the addicted students used the Internet for scientific and academic purposes, which indicated the academic environment. Probably, this is the reason of the lower use of the Internet for video-games, watching movies, and chatting among the Internet addicted university students.

No significant difference was seen between the hours of using the Internet and the addiction level, while in other studies it was significant [5, 15, 16]. The hours of Internet use in these two universities were different, and concerning the Internet connection, there was a significant difference between the students at Payam-e Noor University and Shahid Sadoughi University. Looking at different majors in

these universities, probably the students of Shahid Saoughi University of Medical Sciences had less free time to spend on the Internet. In this study, most of the addicted users reported less than one hour Internet use each day. However, in other studies, it was more than two hours per day for the Internet addicted users [4].

Considering the place of connection, most of the participants mentioned their workplace. Also there were several options on the questionnaire, among which office and dormitory had less addicted students comparing to other options. However, in this study, contrary to other studies, there was no significant relationship between the Internet addiction and connection place. In general, the connection was made in dormitories by the majority of the students; this has not been confirmed in other studies [4]. It seems that since most of the participants of this study were living at dormitories, the first place for using the Internet was there.

There was no significant difference between the addicted and normal users in terms of their Internet skills. Most of the addicted students reported elementary skills on the Internet. The findings indicated that the Internet is mostly used for getting news, using e-mails, and for academic purposes. In terms of surfing the Internet, and since they have learned the necessary skills of Internet searching during

their education and by the help of their classmates, they concluded that using the Internet requires an elementary skills.

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