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Comparison Internet Addiction among Students of Zahedan and Kerman Universities of Medical Sciences

Zaynab Poodineh[1], Farzaneh Barati[2], Mahdieh Poodineh Moghadam*[3], Nezar Ghanbarzehi[4] and Abbas Balouchi[5]

[1]*Nursing Department, Nursing and Midwifery School, Zahedan University of Medical Science, Zahedan, Iran*
[2]*Msc in Nursing Education, Department in Nursing, Neyshabur university of Medical Sciences, Iran*
[3]*Lecturer, Department of Nursing, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Zabol University of Medical Sciences, Zabol, Iran*
[4]*Msc of Nursing, Department of Nursing, Iranshahr University of Medical Sciences, Iranshahr, Iran*
[5]*MSc student, Student Research Committee, Zabol University of Medical Science, Zabol, Iran*

ABSTRACT

Internet addiction", "differences caused by overuse of the Internet" or "irrational and pathological use of the Internet" all are phrases used to describe one of the modern diseases caused by the Internet. Present research aims to comparatively study the mean Internet addiction among students of Zahedan and Kerman universities of medical sciences in 2014. The present research was a cross-sectional, descriptive-analytic study. The statistical sample included 220 students of Zahedan and Kerman universities of medical sciences in 2013 who were selected using the stratified random sampling method. A three-part questionnaire (demographics, Young's Internet Addiction Test, and Spiritual Health Questionnaire) was used for collecting the require data and information. The results of this study showed that the mean age of students was 2.08 ± 21.19, in an age range of 18-35. In addition, 51.4%, 48.6%, 11.4%, and 88.6% of students were female, male, married, and single, respectively. In terms of educational grade, 75% of them were bachelor's and 25% were PhD students. Based on total scores of Internet Addiction Test, 55.9% of students participated in this study were ordinary users and 35.9%, 5.9%, and 2.3% of them, respectively, were mild, moderate, and severe addicted users. One of the most important measures for the proper management of the Internet use is to set a specific time for the Internet use. In addition, understanding the attitudes and thoughts of individuals who spend much time surfing the net and are affected with some sort of Internet addiction helps us to develop and implement more disciplined and organized deterrence programs for Internet addiction.

Key words: Internet Addiction; Students; cross-sectional

INTRODUCTION

"Internet addiction", "differences caused by overuse of the Internet" or "irrational and pathological use of the Internet" all are phrases used to describe one of the modern diseases caused by the Internet. Ivan Goldberg, a psychiatrist of Columbia University, firstly introduced the term "Internet Addiction Disorder" in July 1995 [1]. To many people, the concept and definition of Internet addiction is somewhat exaggerated and they believe that addiction is only related to drugs and alcohol. Regardless of whether it is a disease, mental trauma or social harm, Internet addiction or behavioral dependence on the Internet is a chronic, pervasive, and recurrent phenomenon associated with serious physical, financial, family, social, and psychological damages. Yang (1999) points out that an Internet addict is one who spends at least 38 hours per week or 8 hours a day on using the Interne [2]. Specialists of pathology propose the most limited definition to classify the use of the Internet. It seems that the Internet gradually occupies a large part of the daily lives of people, especially young ones. Studies in the US indicate that the Internet use among young people is more than any other age group[3]. There are various statistics about the

prevalence of Internet addiction in different societies[4]. However, the ratio of Internet addicts has been estimated to be 2-5 million per every 50 million of ordinary users, on average. In other words, it can be stated that approximately 5-10% of Internet users suffer from Internet addiction. In addition, 2-3% out of these Internet addicts use it abnormally and excessively [5].

Given the special features of the Internet such as its 24-hour availability, quick and easy search of a variety of subjects, speed, and anonymity, the number of its users is increasing day by day all over the world[6]. Therefore, considering the fast widespread of the Internet and rapid growth of its users on the one hand and Iran's youthful population structure and their requirements on the other hand, the problems and challenges caused by this technology in society, along with its positive effects, are not unexpected[7].

According to previous studies and their sometimes contradictory findings, given the development and widespread use of the Internet in our society, especially in the student class, and with regard to the point that Internet addiction has been studies and discussed in many industrial and developed countries, it seems that Internet addiction can affect physical and mental health of the youth and young adults in Iran and cause problem and harms in the future[8]. Hence, the present research aims to comparatively study the mean Internet addiction among students of Zahedan and Kerman universities of medical sciences in 2014.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present research was a cross-sectional, descriptive-analytic study. The statistical sample included 220 students of Zahedan and Kerman universities of medical sciences in 2013 who were selected using the stratified random sampling method. The participants were selected using the simple random sampling method. After referring to classes and dormitories, the participants were briefed on the research purpose and then the questionnaire was handed out among them. They were asked to fill it out in 15 minutes. A three-part questionnaire (demographics, Young's Internet Addiction Test, and Spiritual Health Questionnaire) was used for collecting the require data and information. The first part measured demographic characteristics including age, gender, and economic status. The 20-item Internet Addiction Test was developed by Kimberly Young in 1998(18). The items are scored based on 5-point Likert scale (1: never, 2: rarely, 3: sometimes, 4: often, and 5: always). Score range on this test is between 20 to 100 based on which the respondents are classified in three categories of normal users (20-49), users with low addiction (50-79), and users with severe addiction (80-100). The reliability and validity of this scale were confirmed by Widianto and McMorran with a Cronbach's alpha of more than 0.85(19). In Iran, Cronbach's alpha of this scale was reported to be 0.88 by Ghassemzadeh et al (20). Spiritual well-being was measured by the 20-item Spiritual Well-being Scale of Ellison and Paloutzian(21). In this scale, 10 items are related to religious well-being and the other 10 items deal with existential well-being. The items are scored based on 6-point Likert scale (1: completely disagree, 2: disagree, 3: relatively disagree, 4: relatively agree, 5: agree, and 6: completely agree) and the score range is between 20 and 120. Based on the obtained scores, the respondents are divided into 3 categories of low spiritual well-being (20-40), moderate spiritual well-being (40-70), and strong spiritual well-being (more than 70). The validity and reliability of this scale have been confirmed in Iran by Fatemi et al. (2006). In the present study, after translating to Farsi, the validity of the scale was confirmed using content validity and its Cronbach's alpha was obtained 85%(22.(Descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, and frequency percentage) were used for determining the frequency of demographics and the level of Internet addiction and spiritual well-being. To study the relationship between Internet addiction, spiritual well-being, and demographics, Chi-square test was used. All statistical analyses were performed in SPSS-22 at the significance level of $p<0.05$.

RESULTS

The results of this study showed that the mean age of students was 2.08 ± 21.19, in an age range of 18-35. In addition, 51.4%, 48.6%, 11.4%, and 88.6% of students were female, male, married, and single, respectively. In terms of educational grade, 75% of them were bachelor's and 25% were PhD students. About the Internet use, 70.9% were using the Internet more than 2 years and 51.4% of them had access to the Internet less than 5 hours per week. According to the results, 71.4% of students use Farsi websites more than 50% and 86.4% of them use foreign websites less than 50%. The main reason for Internet use in 51.8% of students was mentioned to be scientific purposes. In addition, 35.5% of students stated that they use the Internet in the university. The mean score of Internet addiction was obtained 18.89 ± 23.07. Based on total scores of Internet Addiction Test, 55.9% of students participated in this study were ordinary users and 35.9%, 5.9%, and 2.3% of them, respectively, were mild, moderate, and severe addicted users. The lowest and the highest mean score of Internet addiction were related to Faculty of Dentistry and Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery, respectively. The study findings also revealed that Internet addiction has a significant relationship with gender and hours of Internet use ($P<0.05$), while it presented no significant relationship with educational grade and marital status.

Table 1: Determination of Internet addiction in students of both genders of Zahedan and Kerman universities of medical sciences

Internet addiction / Gender	Number	Mean and standard deviation	Test result
Female	113	14.43 ± 16.88	t= -5.29 df= 218 P=0.001
Male	107	20.82 ± 29.60	

According to t-test results, a significant relationship was observed between gender and Internet addiction, as men were more addicted to the Internet than men (P=000.1).

Table 2: Determination of Internet addiction in single and married students of Zahedan and Kerman universities of medical sciences

Internet addiction / Marital status	Number	Mean and standard deviation	Test result
Single	195	17.28 ± 23	t= -1.48 df= 218 P=0.88
Married	25	29.01 ± 23.60	

As above table shows, there was no significant relationship between Internet addiction and marital status of students (P=0.88).

Table 3: Determination of Internet addiction of Zahedan and Kerman universities of medical sciences

Variables			Number	Frequency	Test result
Personal	Age (18-35) years old				p=0.082
	Gender	Female	113	51.4	p=0.0001
	Male		107	48.6	
	Educational grade	Bachelor			p=0.164
	PhD		165	75	
			55	25	
	Faculty	Medical	35	15.9	p=0.224
	Dentistry		21	9.5	
	Par-medicine		39	17.7	
	Nursing		50	22.7	
	Rehabilitation		30	13.6	
	Public Health		45	20.5	
	Marital status	Single	195	88.6	p=0.88
	Married		25	11.4	
Internet	Duration of use				
	Less than 6 months		24	10.9	
	Between 6 months and 1 year		11	5	
	1-2 years		29	13.2	
	More than 2 years		156	70.9	
	Hours of use per week		119	51.1	p=0.0001
	Less than 5 hour	5-10 hours	55	25	
	More than 10 hours		46	20.9	
	Place of use	Home	47	21.4	p=0.092
	Internet café		5	2.3	
	University		78	35.5	
	Dormitory		29	13.2	
	All items		61	27.7	
	Purpose of use	Scientific	114	51.8	p=0.0001
	Chatting and checking email		45	20.5	
	Gaming		10	4.5	
	Others		18	8.2	
	All items		33	15	
Total			220	100	

DISCUSSION

In a study conducted by JYW Wu h *et al*. entitled “Studying the personality variables predicting Internet addiction”, 86% of Internet users were addicted (56% mild, 28% moderate, and 2% severe)[9].In another study conducted in Korea, Kim reported that the prevalence of Internet addiction varies between 3% and 22%[10]. Alvai *et al*. carried out a study entitled “Studying the relationship of psychiatric symptoms with Internet addiction among students of universities in Isfahan” and concluded that 15% of Internet users were addicted and 85% of them were ordinary. Many studies have been conducted on Internet addiction which indicate the prevalence of Internet addiction all over the world[11]. Since about 2.3% of students in the present study had severe Internet addiction and 55.9% of them were ordinary users, which is consistent with the findings of some other domestic and foreign studies, it can be concluded that Internet is not an enemy but people are dependent on it and this independence, considering the low

facilities and low bandwidth of the Internet in Iran compared to countries such as Korea and the US, can represent the serious addiction of the younger generation and future-builders of Iranian society. Hence, the health officials and professionals can provide prevention program for this type of addiction by offering training in family and university[12].According to the findings of Alavi *et al*., the single are more at the risk of Internet addiction than the married by almost 3.5 times[11]. In a study conducted by V Stavropoulos, it was reported that Internet addiction in male students is more than female ones. However, Internet addiction general involves the personality traits of both genders[13]. In the study of Alavi *et al*., it was shown that men are more vulnerable to Internet addiction than women by 1.3 times[11]. By contrast, DJ Kuss stated that women are more at risk of Internet addiction than men[14]. Mandel showed that both men and women were at risk of Internet addiction but women had experienced more problems in this regard.

According to the study conducted by Gibbs on 531 students at the University of Texas, the mean time of using the Internet by addicts was 11 hours per week. It seems that the quality while working with the Internet is more important than the quantity in defining Internet addiction. In fact, some people work more than 20 hours per week with the Internet without any problem. Generally, whenever working with the Internet lessens the importance of other aspects of life, it becomes problematic[15]. In studies conducted by Alavi *et al*. and Omidvar, the mean time of using the Internet by addicts was 11 hours per week[11]. Based on the results of a study on university students in the US, most people who are addicted to the Internet use the Internet more than 30 hours per week. The mean number of hours of using the Internet by Americans in 2003 was 110 hours a week[16]. According to the study of tamannai *et al*., 72.5% and 27.5% of samples had access to the Internet less than 2 hours and more than 2 hours[17].Since about 2.3% of students in the present study had severe Internet addiction and 55.9% of them were ordinary users, which is consistent with the findings of some other domestic and foreign studies, it can be concluded that Internet is not an enemy but people are dependent on it and this independence, considering the low facilities and low bandwidth of the Internet in Iran compared to countries such as Korea and the US, can represent the serious addiction of the younger generation and future-builders of Iranian society[18]. Hence, the health officials and professionals can provide prevention program for this type of addiction by offering training in family and university[19]. Finally, it should be noted that the problems of Internet addiction in the studies population is not in a problematic state, but moderate Internet addicts are at risk and the type of their future use will determine whether they will be a severe Internet addict or an ordinary user[20].

CONCLUSION

One of the most important measures for the proper management of the Internet use is to set a specific time for the Internet use. In addition, understanding the attitudes and thoughts of individuals who spend much time surfing the net and are affected with some sort of Internet addiction helps us to develop and implement more disciplined and organized deterrence programs for Internet addiction.

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