



Investigating on the Consequences of Addiction to Internet and Cyberspace

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Abstract—Internet, as the most important means of communication and information, creates opportunities and threats in the lives of users. The research has done also with the aim of harming of addiction to the Internet and cyberspace on teenagers and young people. The survey was conducted using 383 students from the 9th, 10th and 11th grade students using a questionnaire. The subjects were selected by stratified random sampling. Descriptive results of the study showed that students' use of the Internet and cyberspace and their dependence on the Internet was high. Also, religious beliefs and student relationships with family members have been weak. The happiness of the students was relatively low and their social alienation was high. The research hypotheses test showed that Internet addiction and its strong dependence on family members, religious beliefs and happiness of students were inversely and meaningfully correlated. But online addiction and its strong dependence on social alienation and academic failure have had a direct and significant correlation.

Index Terms—Internet addiction, cyberspace, social networks, social harm, teenagers and youth

I. INTRODUCTION AND EXPRESSION OF THE PROBLEM

Today, the development of information and communication technology is such that in everywhere in human life, the effects of the presence of information and communication communication can be seen. Cyber space is a new generation of social relations space, although it has not had much time to live, has been able to well accommodate people of different ages.

The use of new technologies is one of the obvious manifestations of the world ahead. Internet as one of the emerging dimensions of these new technologies of the

contemporary world has a significant role in changing the lives of the people of the community. Today, in the communication and information technology, a great revolution has been emerged. John Fieder believes that this revolution is effective on the world and the lives of the human who live on it which is computer based and has extensive economic, political and cultural effects. That is, information is turned into a commercial and profitable product, the ownership of which leads to power, and on the other hand, it affects the personality and identity of the people with lasting effects. [19]

Internet is the largest information resource all over the world, and is the most powerful communication medium and educational tool [23]. The Internet, as the most important means of communication and information, creates opportunities and threats in the lives of users; since young people and teenagers are most of its users, as they interact with cyberspace, their values and identity will change.

Values are the ring of connection in the culture of any nation and race with the future generation, and neglecting this important issue can confront societies with an identity crisis [3]. For a group of Internet-captured users, the world of chat rooms and games is easily replaced instead of family members, friends, education, employment and sleep. So that some Iranian users spend their time on the Internet from 10:00 to 4:00 and some spend 40 to 50 hours a week on the Internet and go away from the real world which they live in.

So, the Internet is an adventure for those who suffer from psychological problems, but this leads to a defective cycle that the person faces more emotionally and psychologically each day [21].

Communication through cyberspace in recent years has found a significant place among the younger generation of our society. Social networks affect different aspects of people (individual and social) and in shaping identity and even affect the social and economic dimensions of societies [16].

In recent years, Internet has become one of the most popular mass media in the world due to its unique features such as easy access, ease of use, anonymity of users and low cost [10].

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Internet has been able to quickly become one of the essential tools of life, so that its removal from everyday life is inevitable. This change can be compared to the invention of the phone in the early 20th century and television in the fifties. Internet has been cutting the distances and expanding the relationship between human beings. New communication technologies that allow individuals to be simultaneously and unlimited, regardless of where they are located in the new world, is the birthplace of the new world introduced as the virtual world.

Unlike the real world, the virtual world has countless possibilities, such as ease of access, twenty-four hours, simplicity of work, low cost, being hidden the names of users, and so on. People come from different social groups in cyberspace and can communicate with any part of the world they want, without any limitations, anywhere, wherever they are. Internet and services provided in it, while being useful for the acquisition and exchange of information, can also be destructive [15].

The Internet and the cyberspace, in spite of the positive and useful functions that it has for the family, can also bring threats and harm to this social institution. Identifying the various dimensions of these injuries and planning to deal with them is one of the important issues in maintaining and consolidating this institution. This research seeks to investigate the harm and consequences of Internet addiction in teenagers and youth in Isfahan.

One of the Internet harms is its addiction, and in our society, with increased penetration of Internet we are seeing this problem more and more. Internet addiction can cause serious educational and family problems for audiences if they are unable to tolerate being away from the internet for one month; they are at increased risk of being addicted to it. And unfortunately we see this phenomenon among the youth. So that some young people spend the nights till the morning with the Internet and are sleeping all day long and this will be the source of much other harm.

Among these injuries are familial, communicative, emotional, psychological, physical and economic harm [9]. Although concepts such as addiction to technology were studied in Griffiths's writings and computer addiction in Shotton's work, Internet addiction was a term first introduced by Yang. This disorder is introduced with different titles, such as behavioral dependence on the Internet, Internet morbid usage, Internet problematic usage, Internet overuse, Internet abuse, noncompliance, and Internet addiction disorder [2].

Internet addiction refers to a wide range of behavioral problems and to the control of the motivation to use the Internet. Internet addiction is considered as an obsessive or desire to establish a link or perhaps even an expression of the transference or reflection of the special relationship or to meet the need [27]. There are several types of Internet addiction, the most common of which are five: cyber-sex addiction, addiction to cyber relations, addiction to shopping, commerce and auctions,

addiction to computer games, addiction to search and over-archiving of information [27].

Volman is not optimistic about the positive impact of the Internet and the virtual world on human communication and social capital, and tends to be more pessimistic. He even poses the Internet more than any other medium as a corrupting and annihilator of everyday life; because the Internet guides individuals and organizations to the virtual space that is against reality.

In his view, the use of the Internet prevents the attention of individuals towards the real community, and the network's interactions of the people surpass the level of direct and verbal communication. As Internet usage increases, actual and out-of-network social calls are reduced. Although the Internet will increase network weaknesses, but since it simultaneously reduces deeper interactions outside the network, it limits the horizons and perceptions of individuals. In addition, computerization and the high use of the Internet can interfere the boundaries of home and work [26].

McCoyle has paid much attention to the isolation of the media, especially in relation to children and teenagers. This major concern has been raised as concerns over the excessive use and addiction to the media. Often the media's intense attention, especially when one is alone, means isolation and separation, alienation, and escape from reality. The high use of the medium takes the time necessary for social interaction from the user [26]. Morton believes that every social phenomenon has positive and negative functions.

Information and communication technology in general and the Internet, in particular, have a great positive impact, such as access to information and data transfer speeds, etc. While Internet addiction is considered as one of the negative functions of information and communication technology. Charles Parroee the Sociologists believes that life with the Internet is a life alongside a dangerous technology.

Our age is the age of complex and dangerous organizing and organizations [8]. Kang believes that the more Internet users feel alienated with themselves and anxiety and tension, the more they will experience the Internet addiction. This means that the internet addict is deliberately seeking a kind of relationship that can effectively and effectively eliminate him from the state of affairs because of the inherent urgency of pressure from his everyday life.

Yang, a leading researcher on internet addiction, also believes that individuals who are introverted, alone, depressed and without self-esteem are people who use too much of the Internet [13]. Given the growing importance of the Internet and the spread of its use, especially in the teenage and younger generation, numerous studies have been conducted on the consequences of online addiction (overuse of the Internet). Most scholars believed that Internet addiction had a lot of negative consequences for people. Hashemi and Mirzayi (1391) in a research study on high school students in Arak, tested the Internet addiction and its consequences on student behavior.



The results indicated that there was a negative and significant relationship between internet addiction and variables of education and religiosity [29]. Karmashayi et al. (1390) in an online addiction study found that the average Internet addiction among girls was higher than that of boys [21].

Agha Babaei et al. (1391) conducted a comparative study on male secondary school students in Laran district of Shahrekord, and concluded that performing computer games on students' educational status, increasing violence and aggression, alienation socio-cultural and the level of participation have had a negative and significant impact. Farjajolahi Shahrokhbadi (1392) in his research on high school students in Rafsanjan, found that there was a significant relationship between the relative frequency of Internet addiction and depression and anxiety [18].

Kayani (1390) in a research study on the sociology of the relationship between Internet addiction and social capital among the youth of Hamedan, found that Internet addiction among boys was 41.05 and among girls was 41/36. Also, the findings indicate that there is no significant relationship between Internet addiction and social capital. Also, there was a significant relationship between addiction to internet and gender [24]. Karimi (1392) in a study on students of the University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences showed that social dimensions of social cohesion ($p = .001$), social fluctuation ($p = .009$), social participation ($p = .000$) with addiction to Internet has a negative and meaningful relationship. However, there was no meaningful relationship between social compatibility ($p = .164$) and social acceptance ($p = .947$) (from dimensions of social health) with addiction to internet but there was a significant and negative relationship between student's social health and Internet addiction ($p = .002$) [22].

Zare (1390) found that there was a significant negative correlation between the use of the Internet and the dimensions of social solidarity, such as family relationships, association with social partners and social responsibility [11]. Anabestani (1395) also in the research of Internet and high-risk behaviors among teenagers in Tehran, which was done on 330 children (aged 14-19) in Tehran's three districts, has shown that there is a significant relationship between the amount and history of using the Internet and high risk behaviors [17]. Naeimi (1396) in a study entitled "The prediction of academic failure based on the amount of use of virtual social networks and personal feeling" showed that between the amount of using virtual social networks personal feelings of reciprocity there is reverse correlation and had a direct and significant correlation with academic failure [28]. The results of the research done by, Bandani Tarshki et al. (1396), showed that daily use of the Internet on various sites by students who have Internet addiction reduces the sense of happiness in them [4].

Ghasemzadeh (1386) in his research showed that users who had an Internet addiction showed significantly more inappropriate social behaviors than ordinary users, and their level of rebellion was significantly higher than normal users [20]. The results of

Chitzaz and Salek's research (1394) suggest that new virtual networks have had a negative and significant relationship with family relationships, deformation of friendship groups, human feelings, social partnerships, social health and mood [7].

Zandovanian et al (1392) found that cybercrime damage among female students has had a negative and significant effect on the dimensions of family, education, adjustment, religious beliefs and psychology of students [12]. The results of Jafari Nadrabadi's (1397) research show that there is a significant and inverse relationship between the degree of dependence on cyberspace and family functioning, as well as the relationship between dependence on cyberspace and academic performance in students. The study of family function indicators also showed a reverse and significant relationship between dependence to cyberspace with problem solving, roles, emotional association, relationship, and control of relationship [6].

Experimental research by Robert Crout, entitled Internet Paradox, showed that the Internet as a social technology reduces the membership of individuals in their social groups and their happiness. Crout claimed that the use of the Internet reduced the relationship between the individual and his family and reduced the social circle around the individual and increased loneliness and depression. According to the results of this study, the use of the Internet for two hours per week for two years cause reduction of the size of the social network and addiction to it [21]. Horjanatan J (2001) examines the social impact of the Internet on three dimensions of family functioning, free time activities and individual freedoms and secrecy.

He showed that the use of the Internet has been negatively related to working with family members, reading newspapers, listening to radio, watching television and connecting with friends. He also found that the high use of the Internet has had a positive impact on civil liberties related to violence and flagrant contents, and the acquisition the types of friendship [7]. According to the results of the research done by Yen et al. (2007), teenagers with addiction to the Internet have a higher degree of behavioral disorder, family disorder, conflict, and conflict with their parents than regular users [38].

Sanders et al. (2000) have shown in a research that continuous use of the Internet is associated with depression and social isolation of teenagers [34]. A study by Harman et al. (2008) also found that children who imitate high levels of behavior from the Internet also have high levels of aggression [32]. In the study of Koe et al., (2009), there was a positive correlation between addiction to the Internet and the individual's tendency to violence and aggression [33]. Yang et al. (2005) in their research showed that Internet addicted users have more features like depression, anxiety, and escaping than those who use less of the Internet [37].

Eric (2000) has found a meaningful relationship in his study between Internet use and loneliness and isolation. In this sense, the more one depends on the Internet, the less his connection with the community and others [31]. Whitney (2008) in his study concluded that virtual space provides a unique



environment for individuals to learn and experience about sexual relationships and sexuality [35]. Windham (2008) also looked at the relationship between Internet engagement and psychological change on 614 students after a 35-month continuous use of the Internet.

After the end of this study, academic failure, high risk behaviors and social isolation were clearly seen in subjects. The results of the study, conducted by Bennyard et al. (2005), on 500 English students who were tested for Internet addiction showed that 371 of them had Internet addiction. Subsequently, subjects with internet addiction were tested for general health. The results showed that the subjects had severe pathological problems and in this test they scored lower than the health level.

Subsequent results also indicated that Internet addiction disorder causes low self-esteem, decreased social relations, neuroticism and decreased self-esteem [30]. According to the above theories and researches, the research hypotheses are as follows:

1. There is a relationship between youth and teenagers' addiction to Internet and their academic decline.
2. There is a relationship between youth and teenagers' addiction to Internet and their relationship with family members.
3. There is a relationship between youth and teenagers' addiction to Internet and their religious beliefs.
4. There is a relationship between youth and teenagers' addiction to Internet and their happiness.
5. There is a relationship between youth and teenagers' addiction to Internet and their feeling of social alienation.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Considering the nature of the research and the statistical population, a cross-sectional survey method has been used in this research. The statistical population consisted of all 9th, 10th and 11th grade students of Isfahan city who were studying at the schools of this city. The total number of students in the ninth, tenth and eleventh grades of the city of Isfahan in the academic year of 96-97 was about 39 thousand. The sample size of the study is estimated to be 383 based on the Cochran sampling formula.

In this research, classified sampling method was used. Classes are the same educational areas in Isfahan. In the next step, a simple random sampling method was used. In order to select the school, first all the schools in each region (the names of the schools were taken from the first and second secondary schools of in the region) were written on paper and selected using a simple random sampling method of a number of schools.

Within each school, the two classes were randomly selected on the basis of the inquirer's discretion and in cooperation with the

school's deputy and the deputy of the school, and ten students were selected from the list of attendance and absenteeism. The questioner gathered the children in an empty classroom and, after making the necessary explanations, asked them to answer the questions. The questionnaire is self-report and completed by students themselves.

III. OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF VARIABLES

Internet addiction: The Internet addiction scale was created by Kimberly Young. This scale consists of a 20-item questionnaire with a Likert 5-point option range, which range from never (1) to ever (5) and a score of 20 to 100. This scale examines the degree of employment, obsessive-compulsive use, behavioral problems, emotional fluctuations and the effects of Internet dependency on life. In the present study, according to previous researches conducted in Iran, students scored 49 to higher considered as Internet addiction and score below 49 as non-addiction to the Internet.

Educational drop: Student failure was measured using their average grade.

Communicating with family members: This variable, is measured with reagents of relationships with other family members, speaking with them, sitting together with other family members, talking about different issues, expressing family feelings, having family meals, going to parties with them Travel with family members, attention to thoughts and feelings, family cooperation and participation in family decision making.

Religious Beliefs: In Glock and Stark Questionnaire was used to measure the religious beliefs of students. This questionnaire was developed by Glock and Stark to measure religious attitudes and beliefs (Glock and Stark, 1965). It has been implemented to standardize in different countries of Europe, America, Africa and Asia, and followers of the religions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam, and conform to Islam [14]. The questionnaire is a five-dimensional version that includes five dimensions of belief, emotional, consequential, religious, and intellectual, to measure religiosity. At the last run of the test on students, the alpha of the questionnaire was 83%. This test is also highly reliable due to its standardity. The alpha value for beliefs dimension is 81%, emotional dimension 75%, outcome dimension 72%, and ritual dimension 83%. [14].

Happiness: To measure the happiness of students, Oxford Happiness Questionnaire has been used, which includes 33 propositions of six options, and its options are based on Likert scale, respectively, from one to six, so that the score is completely opposite = 1 somewhat opposite = 2 slightly Opposition = 3 slightly agree = 4 Somewhat agree = 5 and totally agree = 6. More points are more happiness. Cronbach's alpha has been reported to be 0.91 [4].

The sense of social alienation: This variable has been measured using indices of feeling powerlessness, anomalies, social isolation, senselessness, self alienation, and cultural alienation.



Feeling powerless: lack of control over life, inability to deal with problems, belief in appreciation, and lack of participation
 Feeling Anomaly: Failure to comply with the law, observance of the law due to fear of punishment
 The feeling of social isolation: lack of participation, preferring loneliness, avoiding friends
 Feeling meaningless: feeling meaningless about the world, pessimistic about the future, uncertainty about the job's future
 Feel the self alienation: hating himself, feeling backward of others, not accepting himself.
 Cultural alienation: Humiliation of community values, hatred of the environment and school norms
 Cronbach's alpha for this variable has been reported to be 0.83 [5].

IV. FINDINGS

To measure the reliability of variables, Cronbach's alpha is used, which results in the following.

TABLE 1 (CRONBACH ALPHA OF VARIABLES)

Variables	Cronbach Alpha
Addiction to Internet	0.843
Contact with family members	0.781
Religious beliefs	0.801
Happiness	0.816
The feeling of social alienation	0.867

Demographic characteristics of respondents

48 percent of the respondents were boys and 52 percent were girls. 33% of them were educating in the 9th grade, 34% in the 10th grade and 33% in the eleventh grade. The average age of respondents was 16.6 years. Respondents' average score was 14.26. The average monthly income of the respondents' family was 2 million and five hundred thousand tomans. The highest and lowest incomes were equal to one million tomans and 13 million tomans respectively.

Statistical description of variables

As shown in the table below, 17% of students had little Internet addiction. 39 percent said their dependency on the Internet was moderate, and 44 percent said they had a strong dependence on the Internet and cyberspace. totally, it can be said that student addiction is high. Also, 35% of students said their relationship with family members is low. 47% said their relationship with their families was modest, and only 18% said they had a lot of contact with their family members.

29.6% of students had little or no adherence to religion and religious affairs. 48.3% rated moderate adherence to religious beliefs and 22.1% said they were adhering to religious beliefs. In general, students' adherence to religious beliefs was weak.

34.3% of students said they were not happy. 41.2% rated their happiness modestly, and 25.5% said that they were happy and in fact they rated their happiness to be high. In general, the happiness of students was low.

Also, 19.2% of students said that they did not feel social alienation and belonged to society. 39.6 percent said they felt moderate social alienation and 41.2 percent rated high social alienation. In sum, the sense of social alienation has been strong respondents, and in fact they have felt themselves to be alien to the community.

TABLE 2: FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF RESEARCH VARIABLES

Variables	low	Moderate	High
Addiction to Internet	17.0	39.0	44.0
Relation with family members	35.0	47.0	18.0
Religious beliefs	29.6	48.3	22.1
Happiness	34.3	41.2	24.5
The feeling of social alienation	19.2	39.6	41.2

Test of research hypotheses

Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to test the research hypotheses. As shown in the table below, the correlation coefficient of student addiction to Internet is with their relation to their family members is -0.320 and its significance level is equal to 0.001. Therefore, with a one percent probability error, the higher the online addiction of students is, the lower their willingness to communicate with their family members will be.

Correlation coefficient between students' online addiction and their religious beliefs was equal to -0.311 and its significance level was equal to 0.001. That is, there is a reciprocal and meaningful relationship between these two variables and the greater the online addiction of students is, their religious beliefs will be weaker.

The relationship between online addiction in students and their happiness is equal to -0.229, and its significance level is equal to 0.001. So, with a one percent probability error, students' online addiction has had a negative impact on their happiness. And as students' affiliation with the Internet and cybercafe is higher, their happiness and sence of gladness are reduced.



The correlation between online addiction in students and their social alienation was 0.216 and its significance level was equal to 0.001. Thus, with a 1% chance of error, it can be said that online addiction in students has a positive and significant relationship with their social alienation. And the more students depend on the Internet, the greater their sense of social alienation is.

Also correlation coefficient between students' online addiction and their academic failure was 0.387 and its significance level is equal to 0.001 which is meaningful. So, it can be said that the higher the online addiction of students, the greater their academic failure. And students who have used more than the Internet and cyberspace have had more school dropouts in school.

TABLE 3: PEARSON CORRELATION COEFFICIENT OF INTERNET ADDICTION WITH DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Variable	Correlation	Number	Meaningfulness
Relation with family members	* *0.320	383	0.001
Religional beliefs	* *0.311	383	0.001
Happiness	* *0.229	383	0.001
The feeling of social alienation	* *0.216	383	0.001
Academic failure	* *0.387	383	0.001

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Today, the spread of information and communication technology is such that everywhere in human life, the effects of the presence of information and communication could be seen. Cyber space is a new generation of social relations space that although it has not had much time, has been able to well to accommodate people of different ages. Communication through cyberspace in recent years has found a significant place among the younger generation of our society. Social networks affect different aspects of people (individual and social). In shaping identity and even affect the social and economic dimensions of societies [16].

The Internet has been able to quickly become one of the essential tools of life by entering it. So that removing it from everyday life is impossible. Internet and the cyberspace formed in it, despite the positive and useful functions that it has for the family, can also bring threats and harm to this social institution. One of the damages to the Internet is its addiction, and in our society as the Internet grows increasingly, we are seeing this. Internet addiction can cause serious educational and family problems for audiences if they are unable to tolerate the internet

for one month; they are at increased risk of being addicted to it. And unfortunately we see this phenomenon among the youth. The study also aimed to investigate some of the Internet and cybercrime damage. The survey was conducted using 383 students from the 9th, 10th and 11th grade students using a questionnaire. Descriptive results of the study showed that students' use of the Internet and cyberspace and their dependence on the Internet was high.

The test of research hypotheses showed that online addiction and strong dependence to it was inversely and meaningfully correlated on family members' relations, religious beliefs and happiness of students.

As noted above, Internet addiction and strong dependence to it had a reciprocal and significant relationship with religiousness and adherence of young people with religious beliefs. This conclusion is in line with the findings of Hashemi and Mirzayi (1391) and the Zandovanian et al (1392), which have shown that the high use of the Internet can reduce the adherence of users to religious matters.

Also, Internet addiction and severe dependence on it have a direct and meaningful relationship with students' academic failure. This conclusion is consistent with the findings of Agha Babaei et al. (1391), Naeimi (1396), Jafari Nadrabadi (1397), and Windham (2008) who found that students who use the Internet and cybernetics constantly dropped out in school lessons and the result of this research is in line with the researchs mentioned. Internet addiction and strong dependence to it has direct and meaningful relationship to social alienation of students. This conclusion is consistent to the findings of Agha Babaei et al. (1391), Zare (1390), Zandovanian et al. (1392), Sanders et al (2000), Yang et al. (2005), Eric (2000), Windham (2008) and Bennyard And colleagues (2005).

Students' addiction to the Internet and their strong dependence on it has a reciprocal and meaningful relationship to the relationship with family members. This conclusion is consistent with the findings of Agha Babaei et al (1391), Karimi (1392), Zare (1390), Chitsaz and Salek (1394), Zandovanian et al. (1392), Jafari Nadrabadi (1397), Robert Crout, Horjanatan J (2001), Yen et al. (2007) and Bennyard et al. (2005) that all have come to the conclusion that teenagers and young people who spend more time on the Internet and cyberspace have fewer connections with family members.

Students' addiction to the Internet and cyberculture has had a reciprocal and inverse relationship with their happiness. This conclusion is consistent with Karimi (1392), Bandani Tarshki et al (1396), Chitsaz and Salek (1394), Zandovanian et al. (1392), Robert Crout, Sanders et al. (2000), Yang et al. (2005), Bennyard And colleagues (2005)'s findings. In explaining the above result, Wellman argues that use of the Internet prevents people from paying attention to the real community, and the network's interactions of the people outstrip their direct and verbal communication. By increasing the use of the Internet, real and outsized social calls are reduced. Although the Internet will increase network weak links, since it simultaneously



reduces deeper interactions outside the network, it limits the horizons and perceptions of individuals [26]. Mc Coeile has also paid great attention to the isolation of the media, especially in relation to children and teenagers. This is a major attention that concerns the excessive use of addiction to the media. He says that the high use of the media takes the time necessary for social interaction from the user [26]. The sociologist Charles Parro also believes that life with the Internet is a life alongside a dangerous technology.

Our age is the age of complex and dangerous organizations and organizing [8]. Kang believes that the more Internet users feel alienated with themselves and anxiety and tension, the more they will experience the Internet addiction. This means that the internet addicted person life because of the inherent urgency of the pressure of his everyday life, is deliberately trying to find a way to relieve him of the status and state of his. Yang also believes that people who are introverted, single, depressed and without self-esteem are people who use too much of the Internet [13].

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