Original Article

The relationship between internet addiction with loneliness and general health in female students

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Abstract

Introduction: Today, the internet has an extensive position among young users that can provide the field to destroy the health of feelings and emotions and finally the spirit and soul of people. One of the objectives of this study is to investigate the relationship between internet addiction with loneliness and general health in female students.

Materials and Methods: The present study is a descriptive-correlational research. The statistical population included all female students of Behbahan Faculty of Medical Sciences. From this population, 100 female students were selected randomly and the subjects answered the questionnaire of internet addiction, loneliness and general health. Data analysis was done by descriptive statistics, Pearson method and SPSS 22 software.

Results: The findings showed that there is a relationship between internet addiction and general health. There is also a relationship between internet addiction and general health. There is a relationship between internet addiction and loneliness and also a relationship between loneliness and general health. In other words, as students have more internet addiction, their general health is at more risk and they feel lonelier.

Conclusion: According to the results of this study, it seems that teaching the appropriate use of new technologies like the internet and how to cope with loneliness to students is necessary.

Keywords: General health, Internet addiction, Loneliness

Introduction

Students are considered as the main pillars of the country's human forces and play a significant role in the transformation, progress and excellence of any country. Considering the importance of the role of students in the progress of the excellence of societies, it is natural that the investigation of the effective factors in the growth of satisfying

the psychological needs and ensuring the physical and psychological health of this group is of special importance (1). Mental health is the ability to balance and coordinate with others, change and modify the individual social environment, and resolve conflicts and personal desires in a reasonable, fair and appropriate manner (2). A person who can adapt to his environment and the people around him and society in general is normal in terms of mental health. Among the factors that affect people's mental health is technology and everyday communication through it. The many uses of the Internet and its attractions have led to the emergence of a phenomenon called Internet addiction in recent years (3). Of course, the Internet itself is a harmless tool, but excessive and incorrect use of it leads to the risk of addiction, which has created a major problem for the mental health of society (4). In the meantime, people who feel lonely tend to use social networks on the Internet more, and this issue causes problems such as reduced mental health, reduced social relationships, neglecting responsibilities related to family, work and education (5). People who experience loneliness, because they enter the conversation with negative expectations and predictions, and also because of the lack of necessary social skills, they fail to establish and maintain close friendships. These people are anxious about social relations and sensitive to those who are rejected (6).They face problems in establishing friendly relations, doing social activities, participating in groups, enjoying parties, and controlling the environment (7). Studies have shown that students who are overly dependent on the Internet feel lonely in terms of mental health. Students suffering from Internet addiction do not have the necessary skills in social relations and suffer from high vulnerability and low mental health (8). Some researchers have noted that excessive use of the Internet has affected students' mental health. Also, these researchers mentioned that students who used the Internet excessively and pathologically showed more pathology and psychological problems compared to students who did not have such experience (9). Considering the consequences of internet addiction for the addicted person, such as changing their lifestyle, in order to spend more time on the Internet, neglecting their health as a result of working with the Internet, reducing social relationships, ignoring family and friends, academic problems etc. (10) It seems that it is necessary to investigate the issue of Internet addiction and its relationship with loneliness and health, especially among the young students.

Karat and others (11) stating that the use of the Internet leads to depression and loneliness was a turning point in this field that worried many social science experts. The aforementioned researchers have concluded from their findings that although one of the important uses of the Internet is its social use, but because Internet relationships are less rich than face-to-face relationships, in the end the use of the Internet is not related, but the results of the research in different countries shows that Internet addicts are more lonely than non-addicts (12).

Materials and Methods

The descriptive research method is the correlation method. The research population included all the female students of Behbahan Faculty of Medical Sciences who were studying in 2013-2014, 100 of them were randomly selected and tested.

Research instruments

A) Internet Addiction Test (LAT): The Internet Addiction Test is a reliable and valid method to measure the addiction to the use of the Internet. This paper-pencil questionnaire contains 20 items and was prepared by Young to measure people's dependence on the Internet and is scored using the Likert method. This test was translated and used by Orang (12) in Farsi. The validity and reliability of this questionnaire has been mentioned in several studies. For example, Vidianto investigated the reliability of Young's Internet Addiction Scale and reported a value of 0.89. In his research, Henrich has extracted five factors of spending too much time on the Internet, using the Internet to gain inner peace, prominence, unhealthy use of chat rooms, and neglecting work and academic duties, and in addition, for this The two types of content and differential validity of the questionnaire (r= 0.5) and test-retest reliability (r= 0.74), internal consistency (a= 0.88) and classification (r= 0.82) were investigated and the best clinical cut-off point It has been mentioned 44 times. In their

research, Asgari and Mareshian reported 0.97 and 0.97, respectively, in order to determine the reliability of the mentioned questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha and half-splitting methods (13).
B) Loneliness and Social-Emotional Scale: This scale was designed and prepared by Di Tommaso, Brannen in 2004. This scale has 15 items in the form of a 5-option scale. A higher score indicates a higher feeling of loneliness. The authors of this scale have reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient between 0.87 and 0.90, which indicates the internal consistency of the scale and also the validity and reliability of this tool has been confirmed in numerous studies. In Jokar and Salimi's research, which was conducted on students, English was translated into Persian according to Iranian culture, and item 15 was removed from the set of questions due to the national load of less than 0.30, and the number of questions was reduced to 14 items and its alpha coefficient 0.85 was reported. The findings also confirmed convergent and discriminant validity and indicated that this scale has very good validity and reliability in Iran (14).

C) Goldberg's 28-Question General Health Questionnaire: This questionnaire is one of the most well-known screening tools in psychiatry and evaluation of mental health status. The mentioned questionnaire was prepared for the first time by Goldberg and has different forms. This questionnaire has 7 questions on 4 scales of physical symptoms, anxiety, social dysfunction and depression. The questionnaire is scored in such a way that higher scores indicate more problems. The reliability coefficient for the whole questionnaire was 0.96, and for the subscales of depression, anxiety, physical symptoms, and impairment in social functioning, respectively, 0.94, 0.90, 0.89, and 0.80 were obtained. Overall, the results of this research showed that Goldberg's 28-question general health questionnaire has high validity and reliability (15).

Results

In Table 1, the mean and standard deviation of the research variables are included.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of research variables

Variable	M	SD
Internet addiction	59.12	9.08
Romantic loneliness	15.21	3.13
Family loneliness	17.32	2.27
Social loneliness	15.14	2.89
General health	50.23	12.07
Physical symptoms scale	10.04	1.23
Anxiety symptoms scale	8.13	1.01
Social function scale	9.72	2.91
Depression symptoms scale	15.16	3.37
loneliness	20.19	4.10

To investigate the simple relationship between Internet addiction and loneliness and general health, Pearson's correlation coefficient test was used, and the results are shown in Table No. 2, 3, and 4.

Table 2. Simple correlation coefficients between Internet addiction and loneliness

Variables	Correlation	Significance level
Romantic loneliness	0.231	0.003
Loneliness	0.200	0.000
Family loneliness	0.316	0.000
Social loneliness	0.193	0.012

As seen in Table 2, the correlation between Internet addiction and loneliness is 0.231, romantic loneliness 0.20, family loneliness 0.316, social loneliness 0.193, all of which are significant at $P< 0.05$.

Table 3. Simple correlation coefficients between Internet addiction and general health

Variables	Correlation	Significance level
General health	-0.210	0.002
Physical symptoms	-0.196	0.015
Anxiety symptoms	-0.20	0.001
Social function scale	-0.18	0.009
Depression symptoms scale	-0.26	0.026

As can be seen in Table 3, the correlation between Internet addiction and general health, with physical symptoms, anxiety, social functioning scale and depression symptoms is significant at $P< 0.05$. The person is more at risk.

Table 4. Simple correlation coefficients between loneliness and general health

Variables	Correlation	Significance level
Loneliness	-0.197	0.030
General health	-0.123	0.20
Physical symptoms	-0.165	0.006
Anxiety symptoms	-0.20	0.001
Social function scale	-0.18	0.009
Depression	-0.026	0.011

As seen in Table 4, the correlation between loneliness and general health, with physical symptoms, anxiety, social functioning scale and depression symptoms is significant at $P< 0.05$.

Discussion

This research showed that there is a significant positive relationship between internet addiction and loneliness and its components, and in order to explain the results of this research, we can use the theoretical model of Rios (2001). According to this model, loneliness caused by social isolation or lack of social support prepares a person for Internet addiction, that is, people turn to the Internet only to reduce their loneliness. In other words, the Internet may provide an alternative to the lifeless life of lonely people to go and make another life for themselves.

It is also possible that loneliness occurs as a result of Internet addiction, that is, those who become addicted to the Internet experience negative consequences such as loneliness. It is also possible that there is a vicious circle and a two-way relationship at work, that is, lonely people turn to the Internet to reduce their loneliness, and as a result, their loneliness increases.

The results of this research are also consistent with Ghasemizadeh (3), in explaining this result, it can be said that many female students feel lonely due to the lack of entertainment and are limited and try to spend their alone time. Spending time on the Internet can cause a big problem for the student community. In the second hypothesis, this research showed that there is a significant relationship between Internet addiction and general health and its subscales. The results of this hypothesis are in line with the research of researchers who showed that students who are excessively addicted to the Internet are at risk in terms of mental health, and Croat (17) who reported that the result of excessive use of the Internet is its negative effect on people's mental health. Therefore, excessive use of the Internet has an inverse relationship with health according to research, so that Morrison and Gore showed that there is a relationship between Internet addiction and depression.

So, the more students become addicted to the Internet, the more they face sleep disorders, depression, and daily functioning disorders, because the students themselves believe that when they enter the Internet, they get so immersed in it that they forget time and fall behind in their daily activities, maybe even their sleeping hours become irregular (18).

The last finding of this research showed that there is a relationship between loneliness and general health who conducted a straw research on students and concluded that there is a relationship between feeling alone and their depression. Loneliness can play an important role in the development and maintenance of depression. For example, feeling lonely at the beginning of an academic semester can lead to depression in the following semesters. Also, the feeling of loneliness during adolescence has shown depression two and a half years later (14).

In research, Broumand Nasab concluded that there is a negative relationship between loneliness and general health in students. In explaining this finding, it can be said that the more lonely students experience, the lower their general health. People who feel more loneliness, have less satisfaction and happiness. Also, based on cognitive theories, it can be argued that the constant feeling of loneliness leads to the basis of inadequacy, so that a person with a feeling of loneliness uses his blaming style, which leads the lonely person to a range of negative emotions, including depression. (16).

Conclusion

According to the results of this research, it is necessary to teach the correct use of new technologies such as the Internet and also to teach students how to cope with the feeling of loneliness.

Acknowledgments

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