Effects of ICT on the youth: A study about the relationship between internet usage and social isolation among Iranian students

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Abstract

This paper concentrates on the effects of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) on the youth behaviours. According to some studies people who have been using internet more or in another word addicted to the net, are faced to the social isolation. To test the relationship between these two factors, ICT and social behaviour, a random sampling included 500 people were selected from the society of Shiraz University students. We used the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, 1996) and Young Scale for Internet addiction (Young, 1998) to gathering data. The Results indicated that %13.2 of student's are addicted to the net and more result showed significant difference between differed users groups. Addicted group are more alone than other groups.

Keywords: Internet addiction, social isolation, effects of ICT on youth behaviour, online social communication;

1. Introduction

In the age of ICT, internet and other media have more effects on the human life. Even though the use of these new technologies on the lifestyle of school age children and youth are beneficiary, such as better communication and self improvement, the overusing or misusing of the internet may result in some injury and be solitary to the youth. Some communication tools in the net like chat rooms gives false impression to users, sometimes they are online from different cities and sometimes even from different countries and they think they are close to each other like the family members, on the other hand it result to forming unstable relationship and creating the unreal world by adolescents and youth. Even though, this is not a non resolvable problem, but there is a need for cultural and educational treatment (Javidian and others, 2005).

It is nearly a decade that some studies by different tools have been done to find out the effects and consequences of ICT on the human's behaviour. This study attempts to find the relationship between internet usage and the social isolation among the university students and presents some recommendations on how to use the ICT better to prevent its harms.
1.1. Internet use and social isolation among youth and adolescents

Nowadays communication channels by the internet is increasing, internet mail box, short message, chat rooms, weblogs, and online games all are the social relationship ways between peoples. Every day more than 4 million people using internet social network in the world. But reports indicate that communication by the internet place in the weak level. May be the main defect of the internet communication is that it is essentially based on text, and basically it is not using face to face interaction by hearing and eying felling (see: Saied and others, 2005).

According to Kiesler and others (2000) answering to the question: "does the social effects of the internet is negative or positive?" Is related to the kind of internet using and what are the lost to people when they get on the net. One of the important traits of the internet, which has made it attractive, is that you can be an unknown user when you are online. On the internet, people could express themselves freely without feeling fear, and in the online conversation anybody can change himself to become more desirable by the counter person. Adolescents are able to reconstruct their identity on the net more easily which is not possible in the real world. The application of many and different internet identities have cause addiction to the internet in the recent year. By review of some of the surveys, social communication by internet indicates it is very weak compare to face to face interaction and in the long run, it makes the over users to becomes more lonely (Shojaiee and others, 2008). This finding has been verified by some other studies in which they came up similar results (Kraut and others, 1998; Sanders and others, 2000).

Ghasemi and others (2007), In the study about internet addiction, social isolation and self esteem in the Iranian secondary education students, shows that, the disspread of internet addiction between Iranian students is up to 8.3 percent and also student who they are addicted to the net are more alone and their self esteem are lower than the normal users.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

In order to study about the relationship between using of the internet specially ICT and social isolation of students, a survey research carried out by standards' scales. The statistical society was the entire graduate and undergraduate students of the college of science and college of human science in Shiraz University. A random sample included 500 students were selected from both colleges.

2.2. Instruments

*Young Internet addiction scale (Young, K.S.1998):* It's near one decade which is prepared some questionnaires and scales for measuring this trait (internet addiction). In this research for measuring addiction to the internet we used Young scale because the study displayed more validity and reliability about this tool. In Korea, Yoo and his co-workers (2004), Kim and et al (2006) reported $\alpha=0.9$ for this scale. In Iran Ghasemi and others (2007) reported validity of $\alpha=.88$ for this tool. Our study reported $\alpha=.82$ over the 500 of university students. This scale is comprised of 20 items. The extent of grades is between 0 and 100. Grade of 0 to 39 indicates: normal user, grade of 40 to 69: at risk user and grade of 70 to 100: addicted user (Young, K.S.1998).

*The UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, 1996):* This tool nearly converts to a standard scale in this field and it is well known than others (Hartshorne, 1993). In this study its validity reported $\alpha=.80$. This scale is including of 20 items which is base on self reporting and on a four-point likert scale. The extent of grades is between 20 and 80 and higher grades represent more loneliness of the person (Russell, 1996).
2.3. Procedure and Data Analysis

Three questions that this study design to response them was include: 1- Is there any meaningful difference between three groups of normal users, at risk users and addicted users of the internet about social isolation? 2- Is there any difference between the students of different majors about using ICI? 3- Is there any difference between girls and boys about social isolation? Statistical methods for analysis data were ANOVA and T test for independent groups.

3. Results

After selected a sample comprise of 500 (168 male and 332 female), giving them questionnaires and they were asked to response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of change</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Mean in Social Isolation</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group1 (normal users)</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>45.26</td>
<td>4.212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group2 (at risk users)</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>46.31</td>
<td>4.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group3 (Addicted users)</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>53.36</td>
<td>5.131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>48.31</td>
<td>4.330</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As you see in the table number 1 the percent of spreads of addiction to the internet in this sample was %13.2 and also the percent of students who were at risk of addiction to the net was %31.2. In this table you can see mean of groups in social isolation too. In the next step in order to find difference between three groups of users about social isolation, analysis variance was carrying out. By looking to the table number 2 the result of the ANOVA shows that there is a meaningful different between three groups of users about Social Isolation (F=6.817, df= (2), (497), P<0.001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Change</th>
<th>Sum of Square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>249.792</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>124.896</td>
<td>6.817</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>9105.856</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>18.322</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9355.648</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attention to the meaningful difference between groups, in the next step average of groups compared by Scheffe Test. Results represent that there is a meaningful difference between groups 1 and 3 (normal users and addicted users of the internet) and between Groups 2 and 3 (at risk users and addicted users of the internet) at the significant level of P<.001. Ghasemi and others (2007) reported the same results about high school students of Iran and also the same results found out by Sanders and others (2000). The important point of this study is that if there is not a meaningful difference was observed between at risk users and addicted users of the internet but there is probability of expanding
using of the ICT by at risk users if they could not control the time when using the internet and in this case they don’t get educated how the suffering is to themselves from the harms of ICT.

In this study the extent of using the internet between different majors were tested and there was no meaningful difference observed between students of vary majors (F=2.563, df = (3), (496), P < 0.05), and as you see in the table number 3 the mean score of social isolation of female and male were compared but any meaningful difference were observed too (t (498) = -1.11, p<0.05).

Table 3. Difference between the genders about social isolation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of change</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>51.25</td>
<td>4.455</td>
<td>1.789</td>
<td>-1.11</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>.268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>51.70</td>
<td>4.068</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Discussion and Recommendation

As we mentioned in the paper, using the internet, web blogs, ICT and others internet applying are going to increase. These kinds of applications not only have an important role in the development of knowledge and improvement of quality of life but also increased communication between the people from the entire world. Besides these positive points, the negative aspects are going to grow too. Communication by the internet never can displace with face to face interaction with the member of family and others in the society without making some physical and psychological injuries. There are some injuries reported: addiction to the net, loneliness, decrease of self esteem, unreal world imaginations and widespread of anti-social behaviours.

As we see the result of this study supports other researches about the internet addiction and social isolation. We have observed that widespread of internet addiction between the Iranian students is up to %13.2. So this is the point we must pay more attention to it. In order to prevent the negative effect of internet usage, it is proposed that along encouraging youth to use it to improve themselves, we must, as well, teach them how to control their time, and manage themselves when using the internet and adjust their life with this new technology. The internet is useful if only used in the correct way. On the other hand, the parents must watch their children indirectly, sometimes along side of them while using the internet and talk about it. When parents are talking sincerely to their children and they are making a good relationship with their Childs, it can be an important factor to hinder them from those internet misusing. Social supports from relatives are another significant factor to prevent youth to choose internet social communication and replace it with the family relationship. This is the path that parents must encourage their children to follow.

References


