

Full Length Research Paper

# Investigating the relationship between Internet addiction and strengthening students' social skills

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The present study is about "Investigating the relationship between internet addictions and strengthening students' social skill reinforcement ". One of the social elements in all cultures is social skill or ability to communicate with others effectively. One of the factors that affect this skill is addiction to Internet which has recently attracted the attention of many researchers and scientists. The purpose of the present study is to investigate the relationship between internet addictions and strengthening students' social skills. In this study, multi-stage cluster sampling was used. 345 Undergraduate students of Islamic Azad University of Shahrekord were selected as sample population. The instruments used for the study were two questionnaires, one for Internet addiction and the other for students' social skills. The data collected in the study were analyzed using SPSS software and related tests. The results of the study indicate that there is a relationship between internet addictions variable and social skills variable.

**Key words:** Internet, internet addiction, social skill, university students.

## INTRODUCTION

With advances in computer sciences, the virtual environments become more flexible, more complex and more similar to real environments. Virtual environment that extends by the development in computer sciences is a new area that investigating its factors and implications are important. According to Dowran (2004), the attractiveness of these areas has a significant impact on human behavior to the extent that man may live in environments that programmers are their creators. In all around the world, the Internet has become a part of people's daily lives and any innovation which becomes a part of people, has various psychological and sociological effects on them. Constant relationships between human beings are the essence of society and relation, as a

primary requirement of each system, is a specific form of social interaction. The speed of internet's distribution is 9 times faster than radio, 4 times faster than personal computers, and 3 times faster than televisions. Research indicates that 149 million people around the world are connected to the Internet which increases the rate of 12% per month. In the case of utilization of the Internet among 178 countries around the world, Iran's rank is 87, which is considered as an average country according to the International Telecommunication Union classification. 35 percent of users are young people and an average of 52 min per week is been spent on the Internet (Quail, 2005).

Communication technologies, especially after the invention of printing machine in the new era and

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developments of radio and television, concern sociologists for their social effects. At the beginning, each of these new media cause social challenges and gradually when they were established, there was less concern. In recent years, the emergence of the Internet as a powerful medium for new talks open out the role of the media again. Internet as a medium has experienced astonishing growth in recent years and has some promises and threats with it.

### Background research

"Investigating the relationship between addiction to computer games and social skills" is the name of research that has been done by Sharif and Mohammadi (2007). In addition the positive benefits of computers and the Internet, Internet addiction and computer games were developed by Young (1998). According to the definition of social dysfunction, decreased social activity and interaction side effects of unilateral, between ages 12 to 19, referring to Internet gaming group study was conducted in Mashhad. It was concluded that computer games reduce the level of tolerance and aggressive behavior and in patients the ability to solve problems decreased and in the case of self- awareness, the control group received significantly lower scores. Moreover, a meaningful difference was observed between the scores of interpersonal relationships. They gained much better self-assertiveness.

Aghajani quoting Montazerghaem (2005) did research on "Pathological Internet chats and blogs" and also on the limitation of different kinds of communication with intermediary discussion. Compile positive and negative communication and computer to Internet special and different kinds of services have been presented through the internet (like: global network web, Internet games, email, news groups, gambling internet and etc.). In the continuation of the functions and positive chat room and web writing, dangers and negative functions of the two services have been studied. The main purpose of the article is based on the basis of some social groups (in particular the children and vulnerable adults as a chat room or of the producer and consumer of the content blogs inside are that they can make them to be exposed to abuse others or damage the strong intellectual and emotional and even physical sexual. Productivity proper chat room, weblogs and other Internet services required principles of individual security in virtual environment (communication with computer through).

Sohrabi Haghghat (2003) studied "Investigating the effects of user's social isolation in Tehran's coffee- nets". In this study, users of Tehran's coffee- nets were considered as the population and the sample size was 204 people. The first hypothesis, which shows the relationship between the use of the Internet during the day and users isolation was confirmed. It means that an increase in the use of internet per day results in social

isolation decrease. The second hypothesis of the study was representing a relationship between the type of usage (social- nonsocial) and user's social isolation which indicates that the social use of Internet reduced social isolation. The third hypothesis indicates the relationship between the skillfulness of users and their social isolation which indicates that people with strong social ties, social isolation reduced when they become familiar with the internet. Generally, the results of the study indicate a positive effect of internet on social relationships; however this effect may not be so much.

Davood Abadi (2005) conducted a research entitled "Investigating the relationship between internet addiction with mental health and personality characteristics of network users". Therefore, all users who visit the website [www.cyberaddiction.com](http://www.cyberaddiction.com) and fill the GPIUS and IAS questionnaires of internet addiction have been considered as a statistical population of the study which based on their test scores classified in two groups; internet affiliated and nonaffiliated. Two groups consisting of 60 subjects were selected randomly. The results of the study were compared by using t test and chi- square test. Results indicate that affiliate individuals compared with nonaffiliated ones have lower mental health and have experienced more depression.

Another study also conducted by Hampton and Wellman (2003) in the suburbs of Toronto called Netvyl. Among the home owners in this area, 120 individuals were selected and a full- time internet access applications was offered to them. Instead, they allow that their behavior on the use of internet has been studied. 65 percent of people agreed. After conducting longitudinal studies, it was found out that those who had access to the Internet had strong and weak social ties than those who did not. These people have stronger social ties both with distant regions and their local area. These people were more aware of local news by email and online communities' membership. The results of the study indicate a positive and complementary relationship between the Internet and the real relations. Most Internet users maintain their former relationships and try to expand them.

An empirical research conducted by Kraut (1998-2001) in recent years has frequently been cited by most researchers in this area. According to the findings of the study, Kraut says that interpersonal communication is the dominant application of internet at homes. During 1995 and 1996, Kraut conducted a longitudinal study in which the computer facilities provided for 169 people in 73 families and observed the changes that are brought about by the Internet in the families. The results of the study are published in an article entitled "Internet paradox: a social technology that reduces membership in social groups and their happiness." Kraut claimed that the use of internet reduced the individual relationship with his family and makes small the social circle around individual and increases the feeling of loneliness and depression.

According to the results of the study, using the Internet as much as two hours a week for two years reduced the average size of the respondent's social network. By the size of social network, we mean the number of people in Petersburg that the respondent was interacting with the mat least once a month.

Consistent with the study of Katz and Asp den, Kraut stated that only 22 percent of respondents over 2 years or more could find a new friend on the Internet. Corat selected two possible mechanisms to explain the results of his study. These mechanisms are presented to explain how the isolating and depressing effects of the Internet are. 1- The replacement of the time of activities means that the use of the internet caused in time occupation that a person consumes for social activities. 2- Replace strong ties with weak ties (Kraut et al., 1998). But later, Corat turns back to the primary sample population and again use the same people for his research and surprisingly observed an opposite results. The results of the study show that the same people after acquiring necessary skills and spending more time working with internet, have higher social concerns. He published the result of this study in an article entitled "Review of the Internet Paradox" and again drew the attention of many people. Briefly, Corak seeks to reduce the impact of the Internet on social communication and emotional consequences of it.

Another important and interesting finding was that the greater use of the Internet and increasing depression in the next time period (when online) corresponds each other and these findings are valid even with continuous control of preliminary depression and demographic variables, stress and social support that is often associated with depression. However, it is important that depression cannot predict the subsequent addiction to internet. Generally, the results of this study were consistent with the hypothesis that excessive Internet use adversely affects the mental health and social engagement. Since the early social engagement and primary mental health are generally not associated with subsequent use of Internet, these findings suggest that it is more likely to go from internet abuse to the decline in social engagement and mental health rather than its reverse. One of the sides of the study was that people, who have local community relations at the beginning, are less likely to abuse the internet.

## METHODOLOGY

According to its objectives, the present study used correlation research design. It is a survey research, and the subjects were selected randomly and examine the relation of internet addictions variable on social skills. The study used two instruments. The first one related to the social skills questionnaire which consists of 22 questions and was conducted among 142 female students and 212 male students. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was equal to 0.96 which is calculated using Cronbach's alpha and standard t and z scores for both men and women of Shahrekord's

Islamic Azad University were calculated. The second instruments are related to internet addictions measurement. The test consists of 20 questions. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was equal to 0.92 which is calculated using Cronbach's alpha. This study used multiple-stage cluster sampling. The method of sampling is to choose among study groups 1.Human sciences, 2.Mathematics and engineering, 3.medical sciences, 4.experimental sciences and agriculture. Selecting one or two field from each study group in Human Sciences: majors such as accounting and Counseling; in Mathematics and Engineering: majors such as civil engineering; in Medical Sciences: Nursing; in Experimental and Agriculture: Agricultural Engineering and food industry. Total students of B.A. are 4277 persons.

$$N = \frac{Nt^2 \times Pq}{Nd^2 + t^2 pq}$$

$$N = \frac{4277 \times 3/8416 \times .15 \times .15}{4277 \times (0/0025) + 3/8416 \times (0/50) \times (0/50)} =$$

$$\frac{4107/6307}{11/6529} = 352/4 \approx 354$$

$$N=4277$$

$$t^2=(1/96)^2=3/8416$$

$$d^2=(0/05)^2=0/0025$$

$$p=(0/05)$$

$$q=(0/05)$$

## Research tools

In this study, two types of research tools were used. The first questionnaire is related to social skills; it was done Hadi Abbasi in high school in 2003-2004. The questionnaire consists of 143 items; it was administered to 142 female students and 212 male students. Participants answer on a five-point Likert scale (always, often, sometimes, rarely or never). The questionnaire examined social reinforcement.

The internal consistency of the questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha was equal to 0/96; norm t and z scores were calculated for both men and women in Islamic Azad University of Shahrekord. The validity and prediction was good.

The second tool is the evaluation created and standard by Dr Kimberly Young who depended on the Internet. The test consists of 20 questions, and participants answer on a five-point Likert scale (always, often, sometimes, rarely, include not I). The internal consistency of the questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha was 0.92. It validity and prediction was good. In this study, undergraduate students (online) as the population are considered. Before final implementation of the questionnaire, a pilot run by researchers in a sample of 50 students in Islamic Azad University Shahrekord and reliability was calculated.

## Reliability and validity

### Reliability

Validity and reliability of a measurement accuracy and stability is important. The reliability of the two means: first, if a test is run multiple times on a single sample in all cases, and the second refers to the internal consistency test; in the sense that the test questions the extent of mutual relationship between each variable (Sharifi, 2005). In this study, to assess the validity of the questionnaire, it was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients on the internet; it was 0.93 to 0.01 which is significant. So it can be

**Table 1.** Dependence of frequency distribution and percentage of respondents to the Internet in terms of gender.

Gender		Amount dependence on the Internet			Total
		Slight	Average	High	
Man	Abundance	160	52	0	212
	Percent	45/2	14/7	0	59/9
Women	Abundance	134	8	0	142
	Percent	37/9	3-Feb	0	40/1
Total	Abundance	294	60	0	354
	Percent	83/1	16/9	0	100

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics.

Component	Sample size	Average	Standard deviation	Variance
Strengthening social skills	354	Feb-92	0/645	0/416

said that the questionnaire reliability coefficient is high.

$$\alpha = \frac{n}{n-1} \left[ 1 - \frac{\sum s_i^2}{s_x^2} \right] \Rightarrow \alpha = \frac{20}{19} \left[ 1 - \frac{13/5839}{186/098} \right] = 0/93$$

$$\alpha = \frac{n}{n-1} \left[ 1 - \frac{\sum s_i^2}{s_x^2} \right] \Rightarrow \alpha = \frac{143}{142} \left[ 1 - \frac{191/0271}{5446/3825} \right] = 0/97$$

From the formula we have

$$s_i^2 = \text{Variance of the questions}$$

$$s_x^2 = \text{Total variance of the questionnaire}$$

**Validity**

The validity of the pilot test of the undergraduate students of Islamic Azad University of Shahrekord was done by Dr Rahman and Dr Saeidipour and several teachers. The questions are written in simpler terms. Strengthening social scale validity using Cronbach's alpha was 0.96. The questionnaire having 22 items for the implementation of social reinforcement was finalized. In the final questionnaire, Strengthening social questions related to these components are 1 to 22

Inventory dependence on the Internet has a pilot study of 50 undergraduate students (online).

**Method of grading**

Each question has five choices in the questionnaire and social skills: never, rarely, sometimes, often and always. If students never choose the option, it is zero, and if you choose it, it is four score; so the options are rarely (1), sometimes (2), often (3). Dependence on the Internet in the questionnaire has five choices: *does not apply to me*, rarely, sometimes, often or always. If participants choose option *does not apply to me*, it is one; rarely, 2; occasionally, three;

four and five scores for ever. If the individual scores between 20 and 49, his dependence as a normal user is mild. If the score is between 50 and 79, it is average dependency. If the score is between 80 and 100, the dependence is dangerous.

**RESULTS**

According to the information in Table 1, it can be seen that the of 354 people who have participated in this study, 294 people have mild dependence. 83.1 percent of the sample are dependent on the Internet, of which 160 were males and 134 are females, equivalent to 16.9% of the total samples. 60 are moderately dependent on the Internet, of which 52 are men and 8, women.

From the indices calculated in descriptive statistics, it is clear that the raw data alone cannot give basic information and should be defined by a number of indicators. Table 2 therefore describes the data and information in the questionnaire.

According to Table 3, the significant level is equal to 0.000, and comparable with the amount of allowable error, 0.05; the hypothesis is rejected with 95% confidence. It means that there is a meaningful relationship between internet addiction and strengthening of social skills. So according to the amount and sign of the Pearson correlation coefficient given in the above which is equal to -0.185, it can be concluded that this relationship is the reverse. Based on the results, the data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The statistical analysis indicates that the level of confidence is 95 percent and the level of significance is 0.000. Comparing these results with the amount of allowable error, which is 0.5, the hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a meaningful relationship between internet addiction and

**Table 3.** Pearson correlation coefficient in subscale of students' social strengthening.

				<b>Social strengthening skill</b>		
				<b>Average</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>	<b>Variance</b>
				<b>Feb-92</b>	<b>0/645</b>	<b>0/416</b>
Internet Addiction			Pearson correlation coefficient	0		
			Significant level	0/000		
Average	Standard Deviation	Variance	Sample size	354		
Jan-77	0/682	0/466	Covariance	-0.0016		

strengthening of social skills. So the hypothesis is confirmed. According to the amount and sign of the Pearson correlation coefficient given in the table which is equal to -0.185, it can be concluded that this relationship is the reverse. Therefore with the increase of internet addiction in students, social strengthening skills reduce. With analysis of the results of the study, it seems that the significant relationship between Internet addiction and social strengthening arises from positive reinforcement that the Internet provides in individual. Strengthening the social relationships from family and friends will increase interactions and their maintenance and represent interest in the ideas, thoughts and feelings of others. When a person does not receive any reinforcement and rewards from the community and his family, and his interests and emotions are taken care by the internet, he/she prefers to answer these reinforcements and maintains them. So the person becomes more addicted to internet and resigns from the community.

### Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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Questionnaires related to measure internet dependency.

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	I will not be included	Title	Row
					How much of what you want on the Internet is staying?	1
					How do you stay on-line (on-line), ignoring family members?	2
					Staying close to the Internet, your family, spouse or friends, which do you prefer?	3
					How do you communicate via the Internet with other users?	4
					What are you complaining about the online?	5
					For Internet use, how much scores, school performance, and even your financial situation and work have fallen?	6
					Do you check your e-mail before other necessary tasks?	7
					How much of your work performance and productivity is damaged using the Internet?	8
					When asked of the type of work you do, how do you get secrecy?	9
					Are disturbing thoughts about your life and the Internet neutral?	10
					When you are on the Internet, to what extent do you predict everything?	11
					How much of life without the Internet is boring?	12
					When on-line, if a person harasses you, do you complain, cry or get angry?	13
					When not disconnected from the Internet, do you suffer from insomnia?	14
					When offline, do you get distracted?	15
					When you are online, how do you use this sentence: 'only a few minutes left, now Yum'?	16
					How have you tried to reduce your rates online?	17
					Do you try to hide online from others?	18
					Going out and surf online, which do you prefer?	19
					How is your depression and anger when you are offline?	20

**Questionnaire 2.** Social strengthen the skills related to emotions, moods and behavior in different situations and times.

<b>Always</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Phrases</b>	<b>Row</b>
					When others speak, I do not say stop.	1
					In response to the love of others, with a word of thanks to my kind.	2
					To give other children the motivation and energy.	3
					When people speak to me, I listen and I ask questions that seem to mind.	4
					When you say goodbye to friends, pressing their hands as a sign of friendship.	5
					If you do one thing for me, I thank you.	6
					During the conversation, my friends tell me I was asking questions for displacement.	7
					During a conversation with other people smile wherever necessary.	8
					When people speak to me, I care about them.	9
					It refers to the opposite side of my talk, to show to talk like him.	10
					During my conversations with others, I am interested in the show.	11
					I called his friends by name.	12
					When faced with those who know them, smile.	13
					When talking with my friends, I shake my head as a sign of approval of their views.	14
					When talking to children, by saying words like "I", "What's next?", "What did you do?" I encourage them to continue talking.	15
					When I talk to people I look at them.	16
					When I talk with others by saying words like "Ahoom" and "Yeah" I show that I pay attention to their conversation.	17
					When we are sitting and talking with one of my friends are close and friendly a place to sit.	18
					My friends say that when you talk with them, ask a lot of questions.	19
					When one of my classmates do a good job, I encourage him.	20
					When talking with others, I shake my head as a sign of my respect to talk to them.	21
					I try to somehow repay the kindness of others.	22