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## STUDYING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERNET ADDICTION AND SPIRITUAL WELL BEING AMONG PARAMEDICINE STUDENTS OF ZABOL UNIVERSITY

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### Abstract:

**Introduction:** Internet addiction is one of the major problems among university students. One of the factors affecting Internet addiction in this age group is spiritual well-being. The present research aimed to study the relationship between Internet addiction and spiritual well-being among Paramedicine students of Zabol University.

**Method and Materials:** This descriptive-analytic study was carried out on 154 students of Zabol University in 2015. Young's Internet Addiction Test and Spiritual Health Questionnaire were used for collecting the required data and information. The obtained data were statistically analyzed using descriptive statistics in SPSS.

**Results:** Mean age of participants was  $22 \pm 4$  and most of them were female (105), single (119), and of a moderate economic status (100). Internet addiction score of students was  $20.9 \pm 1.9$  which is indicative of a low level of Internet addiction. Most students (104) were at a low level in terms of Internet addiction which is considered favorable. Mean and standard deviation of spiritual well-being among the subjects was equal to  $53.1 \pm 7.2$ . This shows that most students (129) were at a high level in terms of spiritual well-being.

**Conclusion:** To maintain spiritual well-being in the use of Internet, students are recommended to have proper planning and, if it is not temporarily possible for them for educational, research, and mental reasons, control the side effects of unplanned use of the Internet in order to secure themselves against addictive effects of the Internet. In addition, it is recommended that prevention programs and health considerations to be taken into account for the prevention of possible risks and complications.

**Keywords:** Internet addiction; Students; Spiritual well-being

## **Introduction:**

Students are considered one of the main pillars of manpower in any country which play a significant role in the development, progress, and excellence of each country(1). On the other hand, entrance to university, mostly associated with changes in social and personal communications, is a very sensitive and important event in the life of young active and efficient forces of any society (2). Internet addiction is a major problem among students. Nowadays, the Internet has affected an important part of the lives of all societies and the number of Internet users is increasing. According to a report of the International Telecommunications Union, the number of Internet users exceeded 2 billion in the last year. Statistics are a little different about Iran. In 1993, Iran became the second country in the Middle East which was connected to the Internet and the number of Internet users has annually increased with a dramatic rate since then(3). Several studies conducted on university students show that the use of the Internet as well as the incidence and prevalence of Internet addiction are on the rise (4). Internet addiction among students is associated with problems such as reduced interpersonal communication, anger, aggression, and excitement (5). The term “Internet addiction” shows a kind of behavior dependency on the internet and is characterized by features such as depression, introversion, shyness, low mood and loneliness, fear, anxiety, hyperactivity, and social anxiety(6). Excessive use of the Internet is introduced by titles such as “behavioral dependence on the Internet”, “pathological use of the Internet”, “problematic use of the Internet”, “Internet misuse”, and “Internet Addiction Disorder”(7). In a study conducted on 400 Internet users in Tehran, Naseri (2015) stated that Internet addiction originates from poor family ties. It also indicates a number of psychological factors and social ills which direct people towards excessive and unplanned use of the Internet(8). A growing volume of studies conducted on Internet addiction have shown that Internet addiction is a psychological social disorder which is characterized by tolerance, isolation, emotional disturbances, and disruption of social relationships (9). The study of Alavi *et al.* (2010) on university students in Isfahan showed that psychiatric symptoms such as depression, obsession, anxiety, and aggression have a significant and positive correlation with Internet addiction. Internet addiction change humans into abandoned individuals, and their social relationships play a significant role in this regard (10). Human is one of God’s creatures with multiple creatures, each of which should be studied separately (11). Four human aspects include cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual(12). The most important human dimension is spiritual one which helps them achieve the meaning and purposes of life and plays an important role in the health of patients(13). Studies have shown that spirituality can increase the speed of patients’ recovery(14, 15). In general, it can be stated that spirituality plays an important role in people’s physical and mental health and considers a common strategy to deal with problems(16). That’s why spiritual well-being can have a

positive effect on physical and mental health. Social networks, social support, and psychological and physiological factors are among the most important potential mechanisms of the effect of spiritual well-being on prevention of diseases (17). Given the importance of critical period of student life, the high prevalence of Internet use, and paucity of studies on the relationship between spiritual well-being and Internet addiction, the present research aims to study the relationship between Internet addiction and spiritual well-being among Paramedicine students of Zabol University.

## **Materials and methods:**

### **Research design and participants:**

This descriptive-analytic study was carried out on 150 (out of 200) students of Nursing and Midwifery in Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Zabol from October 2015 to April 2016. Zabol is one of cities of Sistan and Baluchestan Province located in the east of Iran. The inclusion criteria were majoring in Nursing or Midwifery and providing a written consent for completion of questionnaires.

### **Data collection:**

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 Widiyanto 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).

**Data analysis:** 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:** Out of 200 distributed questionnaires, 154 of them (77%) were fully filled out and returned. The age range of participants was between 17 and 31 with a mean of  $22 \pm 4$ . Most students were female (105), single (119), and of moderate economic status (100).

**Table 1: Demographics of participants.**

Variable	Total	
	Mean $\pm$ SD	N
<b>Age (year)</b>	22 $\pm$ 4	154
<b>Gender</b>	N	%
Female	105	68.2
Male	48	31.2
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	119	77.3
Married	35	22.5
<b>Economic status</b>		
Poor	11	7.1
Moderate	100	64.9
Good	43	27.5

Internet addiction score of students was  $20.9 \pm 1.9$  which is indicative of a low level of Internet addiction. Most students (104) were at a low level in terms of Internet addiction which is considered favorable. Mean and standard deviation of spiritual well-being among the subjects was equal to  $53.1 \pm 7.2$ . This shows that most students (129) were at a high level in terms of spiritual well-being (Table 2).

**Table 2: Level of Internet addiction and spiritual well-being among students of Zabol University of Medical Sciences.**

Level of Internet addiction and spiritual well-being		N	%	Mean $\pm$ SD
Level of Internet addiction	Low	104	67.5	20.9 $\pm$ 1.9
	Moderate	42	27.3	
	Severe	8	5.2	
Level of spiritual well-being	Poor	20	12.9	53.1 $\pm$ 7.2
	Moderate	5	3.2	
	Strong	129	83.8	

The results of independent t-test showed no significant difference between genders in terms of Internet addiction score (P=0.194). In addition, no significant difference was found between the married and the single on Internet addiction score (P=0.21). According to the results of chi-square test, there was no significant difference between Internet addiction and spiritual well-being (P=0.174).

The results showed that there is a significant relationship between religious well-being and Internet addiction (P=0.01), while such a relationship was not found between existential well-being and Internet addiction (P=0.32).

**Table 3: Relationship between spiritual well-being and Internet addiction among students of Zabol University of Medical Sciences.**

Level of Internet addiction \ Level of spiritual well-being	Low	Moderate	Severe	P-value
Religious well-being	12±1.2	14±0.4	8.4±1.02	P=0.01
Existential well-being	10±0.9	9±0.6	11±1.4	P=0.32

**Discussion:** The present research studied the relationship between Internet addiction and spiritual well-being among Paramedicine students of Zabol University in 2016. The findings showed that the participants were at a low level of Internet addiction (67.5%). This is consistent with the results of Wahhabi *et al.* (2014) who reported that dependence on the Internet was low (65.2%) among 384 students of Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences (23). In addition, the findings of Ahangarzadeh in 2011-2012 showed that Internet use among students of Urmia University of Medical Sciences was at a normal level and there was no case of addictive Internet use among the participants(24). Moeedfar *et al.* (2009) also reported that Internet use is normal among adolescents and young people of Tehran(25). The results of the present study on the status of Internet addiction are consistent with the findings of Chou, Chien (26), K Nalwa, (27), and W Li (28) but inconsistent with the results of Dadipour *et al.* (2012-2013) who studied Internet addiction and its risk factors among students of Bandar Abbas University of Medical Sciences and concluded that 266 students were at risk and 69 students were identified as addicted users(29). A study conducted among American students indicated a 12% Internet addiction among them, which reports lower dependence on the Internet compared to the present study(30). The findings of this study showed that Internet addiction score of female and male students was 25 and 34, respectively and there was no significant relationship. This is consistent with the findings of Jelenchick *et al.* who found no significant relationship between gender and addiction. In the present study, an increase was found in Internet addiction score of students(30). Ahangarzadeh(24)) also reported gender differences in their results. In this regard, the results of Wahhabi showed that dependence on the Internet in boys is higher than in girls and there is a

significant relationship between dependence on the Internet and gender. A Durndell *et al.* also stated that there is a significant relationship between dependence on the Internet and gender, as boys are more addicted to the Internet than girls by 3-5 times(31). The results of this study indicated a significant relationship between Internet addiction and religious well-being (one of the aspects of spiritual well-being) which is consistent with the findings of Shekarafshan who studied the relationship of social phobia, spiritual well-being, and life satisfaction with Internet addiction among students of Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman and found a significant relationship between spiritual well-being and Internet addiction(32). The findings of Shekarafshan also showed that spiritual well-being can explain 5% of changes related to Internet addiction among students. The results of a study conducted by Khosravi and Alizadeh (2008-2009) on 286 female high school students in Tehran indicated that there is a significant negative correlation between Internet addiction and religious considerations, as Internet addiction decreases with the increase in religious considerations(33). One of the factors which seems to have impacts on religious emphases is family as a social entity with multiple functions. Members of a family are influenced by the family function and this function can affect their mental health and internet addiction(34). Therefore, the result obtained in the present study reveals the relationship of internet addiction with spiritual well-being and its effects on spiritual well-being and lifestyle if people. This is consistent with the findings of Heidari *et al.* (2012) who studied the relationship between Internet addiction and mental health among the home Internet users in Ahvaz and concluded that mental health decreases with the increase in the use of Internet(33). In order to spend more time on the Internet, people with Internet addiction make some changes to their lifestyle which lead to reduced physical, social, and occupational activity, disregard for personal health, changes in sleep-wake pattern, and improper nutrition(35). These items disturb the body physiological cycle, causes changes to the body and mind, and affect the moods and personality traits. Spiritual well-being has been defined as one of the dimensions of health the World Health Organization(36). Spiritual well-being is realized within the culture, values, norms, and local beliefs(37) in Iran and this shows that spiritual well-being in any culture is defined and measured within the spiritual structure of that culture. What is raised today in the scientific literature about the spiritual health is more concerned with the effects of spiritual beliefs on health and recovery of diseases which are discussed in a medical context(38). The results of this study showed no relationship between Internet addiction and existential well-being. Lashgarara *et al.* (2010) reported that the prevalence of Internet addiction among students residing in dormitories of Tehran University of Medical Sciences is 34% which caused no significant change in physical dimensions(39). However, in a study conducted by Bahri *et al.* (2010) on status of Internet addiction among 400 students of various disciplines in Gonabad, scores of physical disorder dimension of general health

showed a significant inverse relationship with different levels of Internet addiction(40-43). This means that those with Internet addiction had a more unfavorable status in general health.

## Conclusion

In general, it can be stated that Internet addiction as a new form of addiction has been of interest to researchers of various fields in recent years. According to the findings of the present study, the relationship of Internet addiction with spiritual well-being warrants the necessity of more attention of experts in various fields. To maintain spiritual well-being in the use of Internet, students are recommended to have proper planning and, if it is not temporarily possible for them for educational, research, and mental needs, control the side effects of unplanned use of the Internet in order to secure themselves against addictive effects of the Internet. In addition, it is recommended that prevention programs and health considerations to be taken into account for the prevention of possible risks and complications.

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