



## Research Paper: Prevalence of Internet Addiction among Psychology, Accounting, and Management Students at Islamic Azad University of Bandar Anzali



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**Citation:** Peyghan, K. (2025). Prevalence of Internet Addiction among Psychology, Accounting, and Management Students at Islamic Azad University of Bandar Anzali. *Journal of Modern Psychology*, 5(1), 13-19. <https://doi.org/10.22034/jmp.2025.501669.1127>

<https://doi.org/10.22034/jmp.2025.501669.1127>

### Article info:

#### Received date:

23 Sept. 2024

#### Accepted date:

05 Dec. 2024

### Keywords:

Addiction, Internet,  
Prevalence, University  
Students

### Abstract

**Objective:** Internet dependency has become a global problem due to its high prevalence, rapid growth rate, and serious adverse consequences. Therefore, the present study aimed to investigate the prevalence of internet addiction among students majoring in Psychology, Accounting, and Management at the Islamic Azad University, Bandar Anzali Branch.

**Methods:** This research was a descriptive study. The population of the study included all students majoring in Psychology, Accounting, and Management at the International Branch of Bandar Anzali Azad University in the academic year (2023-2024). Out of this population, 150 individuals were selected using the convenience sampling method. Then, the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) was administered to them, and the data were analyzed using frequency and percentage distributions. The analysis was performed using SPSS27 software.

**Results:** The obtained frequency and percentage showed that 64 subjects (43.2%) were normal users without dependence or addiction to the internet. 75 subjects (46.8%) were at risk of internet addiction (had internet dependence), and 11 subjects (6%) had internet addiction.

**Conclusion:** There was a small amount of internet addiction among students, but a high percentage of students had internet dependence, which justifies the need to pay attention to educating students on the optimal use of cyberspace.

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## 1. Introduction

Today, the internet has become an essential tool for interaction and communication. People's daily activities, especially students', depend on the existence of the internet, and life without it is almost impossible (Seddighi et al., 2021). About 14% of people over 15 years old worldwide use the internet (Bashirian et al., 2022), and the number of users is growing day by day (Mirzaian et al., 2011); so that the number of internet users at the end of 2015 was 3.3 billion people and the internet penetration rate reached 45% of the population; however, this rate has been reported 57.2% in Iran, and 70% of internet users in Iran are in the age group of 20 to 44 years (Sayyed-Ghaleh et al., 2022). The internet, with all its advantages, has harms and shortcomings, and the many applications of the internet and its attractions have caused a phenomenon called internet addiction to emerge in recent years (Hassanzadeh, 2009).

According to the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, internet addiction is a pattern of excessive internet use that is accompanied by unpleasant internal states such as tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, a persistent desire to control behavior, spending significant time on internet-related matters, anger, aggression, and excitement (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Internet dependency, regardless of whether it is considered a mental disorder or a social problem, is a chronic and relapsing phenomenon that is associated with serious physical, financial, family, social, and psychological damage, and in this regard, factors such as psychological, cognitive,

family, and social factors are involved (Asghari, 2023).

Research has shown that youth and adolescents have the largest share in internet usage, which has many significant negative effects on them (Akbarzadeh, 2020). The increasing growth and unpleasant complications that internet addiction brings have led it to be referred to as an addiction that is the forefront of all behavioral addictions (Taleghani Nejad, 2019). The study by Hosseini Beheshtian (2012) at Tehran University of Medical Sciences reported the prevalence of internet addiction among female students to be 52.6% and among male students to be 47.6%. Mousavimoghadam et al. (2017) concluded in their study that internet use is expanding among the new generation of society. Correspondingly, in the study by Ansari et al. (2016), the prevalence of internet addiction among students was reported to be 33.8%. The findings of the study by Turi et al. (2015) showed that 20.5% of students have mild internet addiction and 5.8% have severe internet addiction. Moreover, the findings of Mousavi's research (2022) showed that the prevalence of internet addiction in Iranian adolescents and youth is 2.4%. The findings of Ebrahimi et al.'s research (2018) also showed that 43% of Iranian students suffer from mild internet addiction.

Given that findings have shown that citizens living in developed countries are less likely to be exposed to internet addiction (Feist & Feist, 2002), countries like Iran, which are importers of new technologies such as the internet, are at greater risk due to

the lack of education on the correct use of this technology. On the other hand, considering that the excessive use of the internet and the existence of its symptoms is a global problem (Cash et al., 2012), and students are at high risk (Ebrahimi et al., 2020), and neglecting internet addiction will have negative effects in the social, economic, and mental health domains of students (Mousavi, 2022), therefore, considering the issues raised, in this research we seek to answer the question of what is the prevalence of internet addiction among students majoring in Psychology, Accounting, and Management at the International Branch of Islamic Azad University in Bandar Anzali?

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Research Design, Statistical Population, Sample, and Sampling Method

This study was descriptive. The population of the present research included the students of Anzali International Branch of Azad University in the academic year 2023-2024. According to Morgan's table, 150 people were selected using the convenience sampling method.

### 2.2. Instrument

**Internet Addiction Test (IAT):** The Internet Addiction Test was developed by Young (2004) and consists of 20 questions. Its purpose is to measure the level of addiction in different individuals and includes 20 items. Scoring is done on a 6-degree scale: Never (0), Rarely (1), Sometimes (2), Usually (3),

Often (4), and Always (5). By summing the scores of each question, the total score of the questionnaire is obtained. The score range is from 0 to 100, where scores of 0 to 39 indicate a normal user, 40 to 69 indicate mild internet addiction, and 70 to 100 indicate severe internet addiction. In the study by Young et al. (2004), the internal validity of the questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha was 92%. In the research by Alavi et al. (2009), the reliability using Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire was 80%. The correlation coefficient for internal validity by the split-half method was 72%, and for external validity by the test-retest method was 82%.

### 2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

After obtaining permission and visiting the Bandar Anzali International Branch of Azad University, 150 students from the fields of Psychology, Accounting, and Management were selected using convenience sampling, to whom the Internet Addiction Test was administered (Young, 2004). After collecting the questionnaires, the data were analyzed using SPSS-27 software. All participants completed a consent form and were assured that their information would remain confidential.

## 3. Results

Based on the results obtained from this study, out of the total 150 participating students, 87 were female (59%), and 63 were male (41%). Of these, 44 (23%) were law students, 61 (46%) were psychology students, and 45 (31%) were management students.

Table 1

*The prevalence and proportion of internet addiction*

Internet Addiction Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Normal Internet User	64	43.2%
User at Risk of Internet Addiction (Internet Dependent)	75	46.8%
Internet Addicted User	11	6%

Based on the results obtained from Table 1, 64 subjects (43.2%) were normal users without dependence or addiction to the internet. 75 subjects (46.8%) were at risk of internet addiction (had internet dependence), and 11 subjects (6%) had internet addiction.

#### 4. Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate the prevalence of internet addiction among Psychology, Accounting, and Management students at the Bandar Anzali Branch of Azad University. The research findings showed that in this study, 46.8% of the participants had mild addiction, and 6% suffered from internet addiction. The results of this research are consistent with the research of Hassanzadeh (2009), Beheshtian et al. (2012), Mousavimoghadam et al. (2017), Turi (2015), Taleghani Nejad (2019), Asghari (2023), and Seyyed-Ghaleh et al. (2022).

In explaining the obtained results, it can be said that today the undeniable impact of the internet in societies has been proven (Janocha A et al. 2011), and according to research conducted in other countries (Kuss et al., 2013) and in our country, Iran, and the results of this research, internet addiction among the student population is increasing (Beheshtian

2012, Seyyed-Ghaleh et al., 2022; Asghari, 2023). On the other hand, considering that internet addiction creates problems in the areas of individual, social, and family health, and also leads to risks in the economic life of individuals, it is necessary to pay more serious attention to the issue of internet addiction and familiarize students with the harms related to the internet and its negative consequences (Khatib Zanjani and Agah Heris, 2014).

The population, which was limited to Anzali Azad University's International Branch students, is one of the study's shortcomings. It is important to use caution when extrapolating these results to other populations. In addition to the training required to prevent internet addiction, research on treatment approaches and their efficacy in treating internet addiction should be undertaken. It is recommended that the prevalence of internet addiction be examined in other age groups, particularly adolescents.

#### 5. Conclusion

The results show that students studying management, psychology, and accounting at Azad University's Bandar Anzali International Branch have a degree of serious internet addiction. The noteworthy aspect is the large number of students who engage in

moderate internet addiction, even though this level appears to be low numerically.

### Acknowledgment

The researcher would like to express gratitude to all of the Azad University International Branch students who took part in this study.

### Conflict of Interest

The Author declares that there is no conflict of interest with any organization. Also, this research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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