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Virtual World Attraction: A Curse or a Blessing? A Comparative Probe of Two Age-Leveled Individuals in Terms of Certain Psychosocial Correlates

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Abstract

There is a rising need to explore the psychosocial variables which make an individual predisposed to internet addiction. The present study aimed to explore certain psychosocial correlates among internet addicts across two developmental age-groups. The sample consisted of 120 addicts and 120 non-addicts divided on the basis of two developmental age groups, namely 18-22 years and 25-30 years. Standardized tools have been used to assess the various dimensions of psychopathology, relationship profile, alienation and self-image. The results found significant differences between internet addicts and non-addicts with respect to several dimensions of psychopathology; addicts being higher on all the dimensions as compared to non-addicts. Internet addicts have also been found to be higher on destructive overdependence, dysfunctional detachment and the dimensions of alienation- powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation, self-estrangement. Internet non-addicts are higher with respect to healthy dependence, adequacy of self and balanced relationship with parental figures. Significant differences in terms of developmental age-groups were also revealed. Implications of the investigation along with avenues for therapeutic interventions and striking balance in usage of virtual world have been discussed.

Key words- Internet addiction, psychopathology, relationship profile, alienation, self image