Understanding the nature of internet overuse…….

Implications of the study

Implications for the use of self-esteem and loneliness in therapy and counselling for internet overuse as an addictive disorder or compulsion

The amount of loneliness and self-esteem experienced by individuals explains their internet overuse and its manifestations in their behaviour. The F values show that both variables are significantly contributing to explain all the factors of internet overuse. This could mean that if a person is suffering with the negative effects of internet overuse, he could be suffering with loneliness and low self-esteem. When individuals are suffering with low self-esteem and loneliness, they will try to boost their confidence by enjoying online relationships and try to get socialized. This could lead to spending longer hours on internet and impairing various facets of life. They could feel confident but to get rid of loneliness internet is a very handy resource for them and their improved self-esteem motivates them to go back to internet frequently. The cycle goes on and individuals become compulsive users of internet. Self-esteem and loneliness both are responsible for internet overuse.

Individually it shows that self-esteem is significantly contributing to explain withdrawal but loneliness doesn't. It can be said that if a person who overuses internet is suffering from withdrawal, he could have lower self-esteem. People with lower self-esteem use internet to improve their weaker communication and relationship skills. They spend more time on internet which leads to the symptoms of withdrawal and that is the sign of internet addiction. A person who is overusing internet and suffering from withdrawal, the professional can check his level of self-esteem and if he has low self-esteem, it should be treated first. It could be possible that after working on the client's self-esteem, the problem of internet overuse will be automatically solved as it is the effect of low self-esteem, not a cause. Individually self-esteem is predicting only withdrawal.

The factors occupational and relationship consequences, compulsive behavior, enhanced socialization, and social impairment are significantly predicted by loneliness. Self-esteem fails to contribute significantly to explain these factors. It could mean that people who are suffering with loneliness use internet for socialization as they feel more connected. Using internet for socialization leads to social impairment as people feel online relationships are more fulfilling than offline. They spend more time on internet which jeopardizes their educational or career opportunities and relationships. They are not able to control their

Understanding the nature of internet overuse…….

internet use which is depicting the compulsive nature of internet overuse. If a person shows such symptoms, the therapist can look at the history of loneliness a person could be suffering with. Treating loneliness with other measures sans internet could treat the overuse of internet simultaneously.

Self-esteem and loneliness both individually significantly contribute to explain the factors obsession with internet, internet as a source of recreation, and functional impairment. This shows that people who overuse internet check their notifications frequently though they know nothing new is available. They are spending less time on offline activities like watching movies in theatres and spending more time on internet for recreation. This leads to loss of sleep, bad food habits, reducing interaction with family and friends, and thinking constantly about the activities on internet. If a person overusing internet is having above signs then he could have low self-esteem and he could be suffering with loneliness. Internet overuse could be the effect of these underlying psychological issues. Professionals are helping people with low self-esteem and loneliness since long. Same way they can help these individuals too and by the time they start feeling confident and use other strategies to get socialized, they will be able to control their internet usage.

Finally it can be said that self-esteem and loneliness are contributing individually and collectively for different factors of internet overuse. If a person is showing withdrawal symptoms, he could be having low self-esteem. If he shows occupational, relationship and social impairment with compulsive behaviour and using internet especially for socialization then he is suffering with loneliness. Individuals, who use internet for recreation by sacrificing their sleep, food and family, get obsessed with internet. They check the notifications even during emergencies and are not able to reduce the amount of time they spend on internet. Such individuals could suffer with low self-esteem and loneliness both. Perceived control of internet use is the only factor which is not predicted significantly by any of the variables, self-esteem and loneliness. It is very understandable as individuals for whom their internet use is out of control could be suffering with lower self-esteem or loneliness. Those who are able to control their internet use could not have self-esteem or loneliness issues.

Implications for the Assessment

The scale which has been developed to measure the nature of internet overuse can be used for assessment of internet overuse and would help to gauge the effects of internet overuse people

are suffering with. Using this scale the researchers will be able to assess internet overuse and its consequences in terms of different parameters. Norm tables have been prepared which will quantify internet overuse and its adverse effects on a person's life. This will help to decide the course of treatment for the same. The comorbid problems of internet overuse can also be diagnosed easily with this tool.

Apart from clinical view point, there are other factors which prompt this research on internet overuse. Many researchers agree that youngsters, adolescents are adapting the digital technology faster than older individuals. People of 15 to 25 years of age are using internet the most and that is why they are the centre of digital marketing. New products are designed to appeal this age group, their emotions, habits and values. This makes them early adaptors and heavy users of internet. Adolescent period is very important for psychologically sensitive development, their involvement with the digital technology make them more susceptible to internet overuse which is a big reason for parents, teachers and health professionals to worry. As discussed earlier, there is lack of research on internet overuse. Many researchers have studied this phenomenon and agreed that overuse of internet affects a person's life in negative way but to measure that, no complete tool is available. It is needed to design a tool which can make it clear which facets of a person's life are mainly affected because of internet overuse, whether internet overuse is a cause or an effect of some underlying disorder and accordingly a therapist can plan treatment.

Implications for parents: A tool with all possible factors of internet overuse will help parents to check their children's level of internet overuse and get the treatment. Parents are giving internet facilities to their children so they can study effectively and can learn with fun but mostly children misuse the internet. Many children are playing games on internet at the cost of their studies. They take risky challenges and put their lives at stake. Internet overuse makes them lonely and moody, in fact they love to be lonely so they can use internet for longer hours without any disruption. Parents can take the help of a professional to check if their wards are suffering with overuse of internet or not. This research will try to answer the questions related to internet use and thereby helping parents to learn as well as teach using internet in productive ways and decreasing overuse of internet.

Implications for teachers: Teachers observe that students are always busy on internet and are not able to concentrate on their studies. They are not attentive in class. Some students are suffering with lack of sleep and sleep in the class or feel always drowsy. They are not able to control their emotions and are getting irritated easily. Mobile phones are not allowed in

Understanding the nature of internet overuse…….

schools but some students hide and carry them in school. They enjoy different contents online during recess which causes unhealthy competition among students. They sometimes get involved in antisocial activities. Teachers can refer the students with such symptoms to the counsellor and ask to check whether it is because of internet overuse or not.

Implications for therapists/counsellors: It will help the counsellors to identify internet addicts and custom their treatment plan as it is not possible that one size fits all; one treatment template will not be applicable to all. Unlike other substance use disorders, people who overuse internet do not have to quit using internet as it is very important part of their lives, but they have to learn to control their usage which is very challenging. That is why the established abstinence models will not work to treat internet overuse. People use internet for various reasons and for various time period, it is needed to find the purposes of using internet and to measure the time people spend on internet, accordingly treatment can be decided.

A person who is overusing internet and wants treatment, the therapist can look for his self-esteem and loneliness and specifically if he is showing withdrawal symptoms, the therapist can look at his self-esteem. If he has low self-esteem, providing help for that will lead to controlled use of internet rather than overuse of internet. If a person has lost career or job opportunities and significant relationships because of compulsive use of internet, the therapist can look for whether he is suffering from loneliness or not. The therapist can suggest some offline strategies to get socialized offline which will also keep him away from overuse of internet.

Individuals who are obsessed with internet and spending long hours for recreation on internet, sacrificing sleep and food and thinking about internet all the time could have low self-esteem and loneliness both. If individuals are overusing internet because of these psychosocial issues, then it would be easier for therapists to treat them as internet overuse is the effect of low self-esteem and loneliness, it is not a cause. It won't be necessary to attend internet overuse directly. If people are using internet purely for entertainment then it could be difficult for professionals to help as the treatment for internet overuse, like other dimensions of internet, is not clear and need more research. Therapists are helping people to increase self-esteem and to get out of their isolation. These strategies will work only if internet overuse is the effect of these underlying psychological issues. If internet overuse is a cause then more research is required to develop the treatment plan to help individuals to control their internet use and switch from overuse to use, from non-productive to productive use of internet. Using internet purely for entertainment like, playing games is mostly observed in children and

Understanding the nature of internet overuse…….

adolescents. Behaviour modification techniques could be designed where parents and teachers will be involved to monitor the progress.