RATIONALE, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The internet was initially designed to facilitate research and communication among the academic and military agencies. It came as a boon for human beings wherein, easy access was provided to research and education; at the same time it helped connect individuals located in different geographical settings. However, in present times, mankind has taken its usage too far and it has become a substitute for our necessary chores and activities. It can often replace work, school or even friends and family with countless hours surfing the web, blogging or viewing pornographic material. This dramatic increase in the use of internet, bordering into pathological use have created a stir among the mental health professionals. In the last decade, this phenomenon of addictive use of internet has emerged and is labeled P.U.I (Pathological use of internet). As this is a relatively new phenomenon and has immense impact on the afflicted person’s life, psychologists and therapist are very much interested in probing the psychosocial characteristics associated with internet addiction.

It is a well accepted fact by the psychologists that an individual’s personality is shaped by heredity as well as the environment he lives in. A person’s personality makes him prone towards developing various psychological vulnerabilities. The same is true for the development of the internet addiction. Since internet provides a chance of interacting with strangers without the need to disclose the real identities, many shy and lonely individuals who fail to form healthy friendships in the real world, often resort to the virtual world.

Stressful situations and life circumstances further enhance the risk for development of psychological problems. Individuals who are dissatisfied or upset by a particular area or multiple areas of their life’s have an increased chance of abusing internet, to avoid unhappy situations such as marital
problems or job dissatisfaction, medical illness, unemployment or academic instability (Young 1997a, Young 1997b; Velezmoro et al., 2010).

Adolescents are more vulnerable to be hooked to this disorder as they are driven by curiosity and are undergoing a lot of developmental changes. Adolescence is a stressful period for many individuals which is marked by rapid psychological changes and demands for new social roles. The home environment and parents are still important for the behaviors and choices of adolescents. Adolescents who have a good relationship with their parents are less likely to engage in various risk behaviors, such as smoking, drinking, fighting, and/or unprotected sexual intercourse (Aufseeser et al., 2006). Thus, parental bonding is an important variable which might influence the development of internet addiction as well. Also, children who are feeling bored, lonely or are from families where nobody is at home to relate to after school may be more vulnerable. Sun et al. (2005) reported that less parental monitoring and more unsupervised time were positively related to email use and chat room use.

There is a parallel stream of thought also, listing the beneficial effects of internet usage in moderation. The internet provides round the clock entertainment, affordable up to date information on almost any topic imaginable; social networking sites that allow for both public and anonymous communication, and email or online chat that lets us keep the contact with family and friends, even if they are in another time zone. Users who have social anxiety report that chatting is a low risk social approach and an opportunity to rehearse social behaviors and communication skills which may improve face to face interactions in real life. Researchers point out that internet is ‘custom tailored’ for the lonely and presents a safe, low risk social environment for lonely people (Morahin-Martin, 1999; Reid and Reid, 2007; Van der Eijnden et al., 2008; Sum et al., 2008; Hu, 2009).
Hence many queries regarding internet usage remain unanswered. At what level does moderate beneficial level of internet use spills over to pathological use? How much damage does this PUI cause in person’s relationship, job performance and other relationships and his/her health? Who is to be blamed for this internet addiction – self or parents? There appears to be a little consensus on various issues related to internet addiction and this study plans to throw some light on this disorder and its psychological, social and emotional implications.

The main objectives of the investigation were to study the:

1. Impact of types of internet usage viz., Cyber-sexual addiction, Cyber-relational addiction and Information Overload, on Internet Addiction and its correlates.

2. Gender differences in Internet Addiction and its correlates.

3. Impact of working status of mothers on adolescents' Internet Addiction and its correlates.

4. Relationship of Internet Addiction with Eysenckian dimensions of personality viz., Psychoticism, Neuroticism, Extraversion, Social Desirability (Lie Scale), State – Trait Anxiety, Locus of Control, Sensation – Seeking (Thrill and Adventure Seeking, Experience Seeking, Disinhibition, Boredom Susceptibility), Shyness, Loneliness, Stress symptoms, Daily Hassles and Uplifts, Mental health and its dimensions (Being Comfortable With Self, Being Comfortable With Others, Perceived Ability to Deal with Life’s Demands), Coping (Task Focused Coping, Emotion Focused Coping and Avoidance Focused Coping), Perceived Parental Bonding (Perceived Maternal Care, Perceived Maternal Overprotection, Perceived Paternal Care and
Perceived Paternal Overprotection), Satisfaction With Life and Perceived Social Support.

5. Explore by the use of a questionnaire, if any related addictions are also prevalent among those suffering from internet addiction.