RESEARCH QUESTIONS
Are there differences between internet addiction and pathological gambling in interpersonal disengagement?

PURPOSE
Previous research has demonstrated similarities between internet addiction and pathological gambling, however it is unclear whether they both have similar underlying psychopathological conditions. The purpose of the current study was to examine whether internet addiction patients show similar psychological symptoms, temperamental traits, coping strategies, and relational patterns as pathological gambling patients.

HYPOTHESIS
It was predicted that internet addiction patients would show greater interpersonal disengagement than pathological gambling patients.

PARTICIPANTS
The sample contained 31 patients with internet addictions (30 males and 1 female), 11 pathological gamblers (10 males and 1 female), and 38 healthy control participants (36 males and 2 females). Participants in the control group and clinical groups were matched in age and gender.

PROCEDURE
Participants completed a psychiatric interview followed by a self-administered psychological assessment questionnaire.

MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES
The psychological assessment questionnaire consisted of the Internet Addictions Test, the Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale and the Hamilton Depression Scale, the Global Assessment of Functioning, the Snaith-Hamilton Pleasure Scale (measured hedonic capacity), the Temperament and Character Inventory-Revised (measured four temperaments: novelty seeking, harm avoidance, reward dependence, persistence; and three character dimensions: self-directedness, cooperativeness, and self-transcendence), and lastly, the Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced, the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (measured trust, communication, and alienation with reference to parents and peers).

KEY RESULTS
Not surprisingly, the internet addiction patients showed significantly higher scores on the Internet Addictions Test compared to the pathological gamblers and healthy controls. The prevalence and severity of depression and anxiety were similar across clinical groups (internet addiction and pathological gamblers) but both were higher than healthy controls. Likewise, global functioning was significantly lower in both clinical groups than in healthy controls. The Temperament and Character Inventory scale results showed that both clinical groups reported lower scores on reward dependence and self-directedness, and higher scores on self-transcendence compared to healthy control participants. Only internet addiction patients showed lower scores on cooperativeness compared to controls. As predicted, they also scored higher on mental and behavioural disengagement compared to pathological gamblers. Finally, internet addiction patients showed lower levels of trust and communication with parents and peers, and higher levels of alienation from parents and peers compared to controls, while pathological gamblers also showed lower levels of trust in parents and communication with peers compared to controls. There were no significant differences in pleasure seeking between all three groups.

LIMITATIONS
The patients enrolled in the study were treatment-seeking and as such cannot be generalized to non-treatment-seeking patients. Moreover, the use of depression and anxiety scores based on the past week may not have been that informative.

CONCLUSIONS
This study confirmed previous research showing that there are similarities between internet addiction and pathological gambling in terms of psychological symptoms of depression and anxiety, as well as global functioning. However, the results highlighted some differences in temperamental patterns, coping strategies, and social impairments. The most prominent difference between the clinical groups was the stronger mental and behavioural disengagement in internet addicted patients compared to pathological gamblers. Thus, there seems to be greater use of dissociative mechanisms in internet addiction patients.

**KEYWORDS:** internet addiction, pathological gambling, temperament, attachment, coping, comorbidity

**URL:**
http://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S0306460314000549