VR can help autistic kids adapt better to surroundings: Study

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Using virtual reality (VR) and creating a situation can help autistic children adapt better to their surroundings.

This has been found in a recent research conducted by a professor at Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar. Professor Uttama Lahiri, in her research 'Design of a Physiology-Sensitive VR-Based Social Communication Platform for Children With Autism', has found that since children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) show impairment in understanding complex facial emotional expressions of others and are slow to recognize people's faces, VR can help them deal better.

Photo for representation

VR is an interactive computer-generated experience taking place within a simulated environment, that incorporates mainly auditory and visual, but also other types of sensory feedback like haptic. "Most often, with such children, we observe that he/she, when asked to look at a particular target, is unable to focus on the same target. Through virtual reality, we measure the anxiety levels of the child and eventually customize the environment as per their need. For example, an autistic child, before going to a restaurant, is exposed through VR the same kind of environment, he/she is able to adapt and react in a better way in that environment. VR-based intervention system keeps track of the child's mental state can fulfil this customization need," she said.

While her research is part of her PhD that began in 2007, she has taken samples from the United States of America as well as many institutions in India including BM Institute of Mental Health here in Ahmedabad.

She said, "In our present work we chose VR, because of its controllability, modifiable sensory stimulation, individualized approach, safety and explorative training environment. The primary goal of our research was to develop a VR-based technology with potential relevance to ASD intervention. The current study shows that our intelligent adaptive VR-based anxiety-sensitive system has a potential to provide training to improve some of the core social communication skills of individuals with ASD within the simulated training environment."

HELPING HAND

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