



The Effects of Gaming Disorder on Adolescent Mental Health: Insights from 2024

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Abstract

With the rise of digital gaming, the World Health Organization recognized gaming disorder as a mental health condition in 2019. This case series examines three adolescents, aged 14 to 17, diagnosed with gaming disorder and highlights the significant impact on their mental health and daily functioning. Each adolescent exhibited notable impairments in social interactions, academic performance, and family relationships due to excessive gaming. Clinical records were analyzed to assess gaming behavior, mental health outcomes, and treatment responses. Interventions included cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and family involvement, which resulted in measurable improvements in mental health and functioning. This case series underscores the urgent need for increased awareness and targeted interventions for gaming disorders among adolescents in 2024.

INTRODUCTION

The digital age has transformed entertainment, with gaming becoming a dominant pastime among adolescents. While many engage with video games in moderation, a subset develops gaming disorder, characterized by impaired control over gaming, increased priority given to gaming over other activities, and continuation despite negative consequences. Recent studies indicate that gaming disorder can lead to significant psychological distress and functional impairment.^{1,2} Research has shown that adolescents with gaming disorders are at risk for developing comorbid conditions such as anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal.³ Furthermore, the impact of excessive gaming extends beyond individual mental health, affecting family dynamics and academic performance.⁴ This case series presents three adolescents diagnosed with gaming disorder, highlighting their clinical presentations, treatment strategies, and outcomes.

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Case Presentation

Case 1: *Abc, 15 years old, male*

- **Background**

Abc was referred for evaluation due to poor academic performance, social withdrawal, and irritability. His gaming habits included playing online multiplayer games for an average of 10 hours daily.

- **Findings**

Abc reported that gaming served as an escape from academic pressures and social anxieties. He experienced heightened anxiety and depressive symptoms, exacerbated by gaming-related conflicts with his parents.

- **Intervention**

A treatment plan was initiated involving cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) focused on addressing gaming triggers and enhancing coping strategies. Family therapy sessions were also included to improve communication and set healthy boundaries regarding gaming time.

- **Outcome**

After three months of therapy, Abc showed a significant reduction in gaming hours (reduced to 3–4 hours per week) and improved academic performance and social interactions.

Case 2: *Efg, 14 years old, female*

- **Background**

Efg was brought to the clinic by her parents due to increased aggression, mood swings, and withdrawal from family activities. She reported spending over 12 hours a day playing games, particularly first-person shooters.

- **Findings**

Efg's parents noted a decline in her sleep patterns and an increase in arguments at home. Efg attributed her mood swings to frustration from in-game experiences. She expressed feelings of isolation from her peers, who did not share her gaming interests.

- **Intervention**

The treatment approach included psychoeducation for Efg and her family about gaming disorder and

its effects. CBT was used to address Efg's emotional regulation and develop healthier coping mechanisms. Gradual exposure to offline activities was encouraged.

- **Outcome**

After six weeks, Efg demonstrated improved mood stability and engaged more with family and friends. Her gaming time was reduced to approximately 2 hours daily, and she began participating in extra-curricular activities.

Case 3: *Xyz, 17 years old, male*

- **Background**

Xyz presented with anxiety and depressive symptoms related to his excessive gaming habits, which included gaming for over 15 hours a day, often late into the night.

- **Findings**

Xyz reported that gaming provided a sense of accomplishment and community. However, he also faced academic difficulties and conflicts with his parents over his gaming. His social life revolved around online friends, resulting in feelings of loneliness in real life.

- **Intervention**

Xyz's treatment included CBT, focusing on time management skills and reducing gaming dependency. The therapist worked with Xyz to develop a balanced schedule incorporating academic responsibilities, social interactions, and gaming in moderation.

- **Outcome**

Following 8 weeks of therapy, Xyz achieved better emotional regulation, reduced gaming hours to 5 hours weekly, and improved academic performance. He also reconnected with friends from school.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this case series illustrate the multifaceted impact of gaming disorder on adolescents. Each case presents unique challenges but demonstrates common themes, including impairment in functioning, therapeutic approaches, family involve-

ment, and the need for awareness and research. Impairment in functioning was evident in all three adolescents, who exhibited significant disruptions in academic performance, social interactions, and family relationships. Excessive gaming often masks underlying anxiety and depression, complicating their mental health profiles.⁵

Therapeutic approaches employed, primarily CBT and family therapy, proved effective in reducing gaming hours and improving overall mental health. This aligns with current literature suggesting that CBT can help modify problematic behaviors and foster healthier coping strategies.^{6,7}

Family involvement was crucial in these cases, as it facilitated boundary-setting and improved communication. Families learned to support their adolescents by encouraging balanced lifestyles and monitoring gaming habits.⁸

There is a pressing need for increased awareness among clinicians, educators, and parents regarding the symptoms and potential impacts of gaming disorder. Moreover, ongoing research into effective interventions and prevention strategies is essential.^{9,10}

CONCLUSION

This case series highlights the significant impact of gaming disorder on adolescent mental health in 2024. It underscores the importance of early identification, targeted interventions, and family involvement in treatment.

A holistic approach is necessary, addressing not only gaming behavior but also underlying psychological issues such as anxiety and depression. Integrating physical health, sleep hygiene, and social skills training can enhance recovery outcomes.¹¹

Schools and communities must develop preventive strategies to promote healthy gaming habits. Educational programs aimed at parents, educators, and adolescents can foster awareness about the signs of gaming disorder and encourage balanced lifestyles.¹²

Collaboration with mental health professionals and gaming companies can promote healthier gaming practices and develop games that encourage positive social interaction and skill develop-

ment.¹³ Ongoing research into the long-term effects of gaming disorder and effective therapeutic interventions is crucial, as longitudinal studies can provide insights into recovery trajectories and inform best practices in treatment.^{14,15}

Policymakers should consider regulations that address excessive gaming among adolescents, including guidelines on age restrictions and game design features that promote healthy play patterns.¹⁶ By addressing these aspects, we can better support adolescents in navigating the challenges posed by gaming disorder and enhance their overall mental health and well-being.

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