JOURNAL OF PAKISTAN PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY
(Reviewed Manuscript - Version of Record to Follow)

SPECIAL ARTICLE:

MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNITY TO BRACE FOR A NEWER GAMING ADDICTION

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In the mental health community, there is a growing concern over a form of addiction related to gaming. Video game addiction is when individuals repetitively use electronic devices like personal computers, mobile phones, gaming devices and TVs to play games mostly over the Internet with other people. This trend is resulting many negative consequences in various aspects of life such including personal, social, behavioral, educational, and occupational issues.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (DSM-5TR) by American Psychiatric Association has defined addiction to gaming as Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD) and it is separated in the section suggested with conditions for further research. According to DSM-5-TR the conditions must cause "noticeable and significant impairment or distress of a person's life in multiple areas. IGD does not include general use of internet.[1]

Symptoms of Internet gaming disorder are similar to those of substance abuse include preoccupation, withdrawal symptoms, tolerance needing more gaming time to satisfy urges, unable to minimize gaming time, skipping other social and physical activities due to gaming, continuing to game despite disruption in life, deceiving others especially near ones about gaming time, and taking refuge in gaming world to relieve stress. A person can be diagnosed with IGD if the patient has experienced five or more symptoms in a single year.

One of the biggest research topics in the gaming world is figuring out why it happens. Like other addictive behaviors, it's when a bunch of things come together that gaming disorder can happen. These things are stuff related to the game itself (ii) things about the individual playing and (iii factors in their surroundings.[2] For example, people feeling bad about themselves might try really hard to succeed in the game and become obsessed with it. Combination of personality traits like neuroticism, impulsive behavior, and aggression are significant predictors of internet gaming disorder.[3],[4]

In the studies done for last 2 decades the prevalence is around 4.7%. Worldwide prevalence rate is in the range of 0.7% to 25.5% .[5] Geography is also important determinant of prevalence. Research data has also shown that males and people in young age are more likely to suffer from

IGD. Additionally, IGD is associated with poorer mental health outcomes such as anxiety, depression and stress as well as decreased sleep quality and interpersonal relationship problems.[6,7,8]

In Pakistan, a study found an alarming level of IGD among youth (58.9%)[9.] The most effective treatment for Internet addiction generally and IGD in particular is the Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT). The CBT for online addiction combines classical CBT techniques with specific Internet-related issues. CBT-IA works mainly on three different areas of Behavior modification, cognitive restructuring, and reducing the harm. In addition to CBT other therapies like mindfulness meditation and reality therapy have also been found to improve the symptomatology of IGD.[10] A 2022 study highlighted the role of gaming motivations like escapism and competition in contributing to IGD. The study found that individuals who use gaming to avoid real-world challenges or engage in competitive gaming for validation are at higher risk of developing IGD. [11]

As a part of routine assessment doctor and primary care providers should always ask both the parent and child about the amount of time spent on social media for early diagnosis and intervention. Always assess other areas of interest and leisure activities that exist beyond the use of electronic media. One should always screen for other conditions while doing assessment for IGD like behavioral problems, depression, anxiety, OCD, ADHD.

The very first test to check for Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD) was termed as Internet Gaming Disorder Test (IGD-20). This diagnostic has 20 specific questions all aimed at figuring out how much trouble gaming is causing and how many symptoms gamers are experiencing.[12] Another test called the Internet Gaming Disorder Scale–Short-Form abbreviated as IGDS9-SF is a fast way to assess for addiction to video games. This test is based on the American Psychiatric Association's guidelines. The IGD Recent reviews show that this test has good evidence is quite helpful in checking for IGD. This scale has been translated into different languages like Chinese, Spanish, German, Czech, and more.[13] In 2019, a "Gaming Disorder Test" was created as a screening tool for gaming disorder based on the World Health Organization definition.[14]

It is crucial to develop structured recovery programs for individuals with IGD tailored to their internet use habits and screen technology usage. Recovery success should be objectively measured through reduced online hours, digital dieting, and abstinence from problematic online applications such as specific online games like it is done in some of the other disorder. This approach is referred to as digital nutrition by some authors.

Ethical considerations in IGD research are paramount, given the focus on adolescents and young adults. Researchers must ensure informed consent, particularly for minors, while safeguarding participants data and maintaining cultural sensitivity. Ethical protocols should also

address potential risks associated with diagnosing and labeling individuals with IGD, which might lead to social stigma or unintended consequences.

Existing IGD research relies heavily on cross-sectional designs and self-reported measures, which may not accurately capture long-term behavioral trends or causal relationships. Furthermore, the inconsistent use of diagnostic criteria across studies complicates global prevalence comparisons and challenges efforts to develop standardized interventions. Methodological limitations in IGD studies, such as reliance on self-reported data and lack of longitudinal designs, challenge the generalizability of findings. Cultural and regional variations also underscore the need for more inclusive research. Addressing these gaps requires a more inclusive research approach, employing longitudinal designs and culturally adaptive diagnostic frameworks to ensure findings are both reliable and globally relevant.

In conclusion with the growing use of internet IGD is particularly increased and therefore to prevent the psychosocial implications of it awareness should be created among parents, teachers at the level of school since the prevalence is more among adolescents and adults than children. Parental involvement significantly reduces the harmful use of internet by balancing the use of internet and outdoor activities. Making sure the content is age and appropriate. At the level of adolescents and adults limited and safe use of internet, earlier recognition of symptomatology and early intervention by mental health professional. These strategies can improve the outcome in the coming times.

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