

# Achievement and escapism can lead to online video game addiction

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As online video games increase in popularity—particularly with the COVID-19 pandemic forcing people to stay home—some players are becoming addicted as they seek feelings of achievement and escape,

according to new research from the University at Buffalo School of Management.

Recently published in *Decision Support Systems*, the study found that gamers have a stronger feeling of ownership of the virtual environment compared to other technology users, such as website surfers. This interest in occupying the virtual world can become problematic—even addicting—when coupled with excessive playing time.

"Gaming can be traced throughout [human history](#) as a way to help people relax and retreat from [daily routines](#)," says Lawrence Sanders, Ph.D., professor of management science and systems in the UB School of Management. "But the booming popularity of online games has led to an increase in addiction, which can result in players ignoring family and job responsibilities. Severe cases can lead players to crime, health problems or even death."

The researchers surveyed more than 400 undergraduate business students to assess the impact of achievement motivation, [social motivation](#) and escapism on the psychological ownership of virtual gaming worlds—and how that relates to online game addiction.

Their results show that while motivations for achievement and escapism predict a gamer's psychological ownership of the virtual world, social motivation does not.

"People looking to socialize take advantage of other options like in-person friendships or [social media platforms](#)—they don't rely on the [virtual world](#) and gaming to connect with others," says Sanders.

The researchers recommend several strategies to address online [game](#) addiction. They say families, communities and universities should encourage outdoor activities, such as sports competitions and offline

games, to address the need for achievement and escapism. In addition, parents, teachers and employers should pay attention to individuals who have a high level of primary control—the desire to change their environment and other people to achieve a sense of control—since they can be susceptible to addiction.

Meanwhile, for gamers themselves, the researchers suggest choosing a relatively easy or hard mode rather than an intermediate difficulty when playing. That's because achievement motivation is one of the greatest predictors of online gaming addiction, and since easy modes are not competitive and hard modes are tough to master, they reduce the likelihood of players getting hooked.

**More information:** Xunyi Wang et al. Exploring the effects of psychological ownership, gaming motivations, and primary/secondary control on online game addiction, *Decision Support Systems* (2021). DOI: [10.1016/j.dss.2021.113512](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2021.113512)

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