

Study identifies the personality traits of teenagers addicted to video games

December 10 2021



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Gaming disorder (GD) is included in the latest edition of the WHO's International Classification of Diseases, from 2018. In that year alone, the growth in the use of video games in Spain was 6.2 percent. In this

context, the TXP research group of the CEU Cardenal Herrera University (CEU UCH) of Castellón, led by professor Gonzalo Haro, began a study to detect the teenage personality traits that predispose the youth to videogame addiction, comparing it to substance addiction. Their conclusions, which were recently published in scientific journal *Adicciones*, reveal that a majority of teenagers with videogame addiction are male, with low levels of personality traits related to consciousness and kindness, and have higher school maladjustment.

The researchers, belonging to the Departments of Education and Health at the CEU UCH and the Department of Mental Health of the Provincial Hospital of Castellón, performed a transversal study among 397 teenagers from third and fourth year of obligatory secondary education from five high schools, focusing their analysis on a final sample of 119 students, 6.4 percent of whom were addicted to video games.

The goal was to study the connection between this type of addiction and personality traits that can predispose a person to have it, using internationally validated evaluation ranges and questionnaires. An additional goal was to identify psychopathologies such as anxiety, depression and social anxiety, which are more present in young people with this addiction. Finally, the research sought to establish the connection with [school](#) maladjustment and poor performance at school.

Personality traits

One of the tools used in this study is the Big Five personality questionnaire for children and teenagers, which evaluates five dimensions connected to personality traits: conscientiousness, relative to autonomy, order, accuracy, perseverance and complying with rules and commitments; openness, which includes intellectual, creativity and cultural interest factors; extraversion, linked to sociability, activity, enthusiasm, assertiveness and self-confidence; agreeableness, as a

tendency toward altruism, pro-sociability and level of cooperation and sensitivity to others and their needs; and neuroticism, or the tendency to be neurotic and feel uncomfortable, with mood swings, anxiety, depression, discontent and irritability.

Marta Sánchez, psychiatry resident at the Provincial Hospital of Castellón and member of the TXP group of the CEU UCH says, "Teenagers with videogame use disorders showed low levels of conscientiousness and agreeableness, two of the five analyzed personality dimensions."

Regarding psychopathologies, the study has analyzed those included in the multidimensional system for behavior assessment BASC (Behavior Assessment System for Children), which includes the dimension of school maladjustment, measuring their attitude toward school and teachers, as well as the search for emotions.

"High scores in this system are connected to psychopathology, the risk of school absenteeism and the tendency to adopt new or risky behaviors. In our study, teenagers with [video game](#) addiction were the ones that scored the highest in the dimension of school maladjustment, over those who had addiction to substances and those who had no addiction," says María Isabel Martí, professor at the Department of Education of the UCH CU and researcher of the TXP group.

For a more specific prevention

The goal of analyzing the differences regarding personality traits and psychopathologies shown by teenagers addicted to videogames with respect to substance addictions is to contribute to specific prevention programs for young people with predisposing factors to one addiction or another. Francesc Rodríguez-Ruiz, doctoral student at the CEINDO school of the CEU and psychiatry resident at the Provincial Hospital of

Castellón, says, "The probability of a video game use disorder increases if the individual is a male and has school maladjustment; whereas the disorder for consuming substances increases if the teenager has neuroticism, a low personal adjustment and emotional symptoms, as well as school maladjustment."

For the researchers, these differences can help improve the prevention of addictive behaviors among teenagers, developing differentiated intervention programs in the case of addiction to video games, seen as a behavioral addiction, compared to substance addiction.

Furthermore, these programs would be more effective if they detected emotional angst or psychopathology—in other words, if they work on self-awareness and teach emotional regulation strategies. Additionally, they should foster responsibility as a protective factor against different types of [addiction](#), and explore adaptations and attitudes toward school in a preventive way.

More information: Personality traits and psychopathology in adolescents with videogame addiction: www.adicciones.es/index.php/ade/viewFile/1629/1278

Provided by Asociacion RUVID

Citation: Study identifies the personality traits of teenagers addicted to video games (2021, December 10) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-12-personality-traits-teenagers-addicted-video.html>

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