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Clinical predictors of gaming abstinence in help-seeking adult problematic gamers

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Abstract

Research into the effectiveness of interventions for problematic gaming has been limited by a lack of data concerning the clinical characteristics of voluntary treatment-seekers; the nature and history of their gaming problems; and, their reasons for seeking help. The study aimed to identify variables predictive of short-term commitment to gaming abstinence following initial voluntary contact with an online help service. A total of 186 adult gamers with gaming-related problems were recruited online. Participants completed the DSM-5 Internet gaming disorder (IGD) checklist, Depression Anxiety Stress Scales-21, Internet Gaming Cognition Scale, Gaming Craving Scale, and Gaming Quality of Life Scale. A one-week follow up survey assessed adherence with intended gaming abstinence. Abstainers were less likely to have withdrawal symptoms and less likely to play action shooting games. Participants with mood symptoms (40% of the total) reported significantly more IGD symptoms, stronger maladaptive gaming cognitions (e.g., overvaluing game rewards), more previous occurrences of gaming problems, and poorer quality of life. However, mood symptoms not predict abstinence from or continuation of gaming. Adults with gaming disorder seeking help to reduce their gaming may benefit initially from strategies that manage withdrawal and psychoeducation about riskier gaming activities.

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