

Chapter 21

Digital Game Addiction: Research About Children and Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

The internet and the use of digital technologies are more and more generalized for everyday tasks such as school activities—communication but also entertainment. Its use is cross-sectional at various ages, starting earlier and earlier. Thus, this chapter aims to clarify the meaning of digital game addiction and its implication to the child/adolescent life, namely on the family functioning but also other areas. Risk and protector factors will be explored regarding digital game addiction. Positive outcomes that have been considered important in the use of digital games will be explored motives as well for digital gaming. Research in area has shown that parents have difficulties in management of child behavior because they also have difficulties themselves to stop their behaviors, so warning signs of the presence of digital game addiction will also be explored to help parents recognize this problem. Some measures will be presented. Finally, preventive and intervention strategies will be presented at the family level. Some empirically validated intervention strategies stand out.

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INTRODUCTION

Our children and adolescents are what some author called as “generation cord” (Patrão, 2017). This generation “it is one that cannot disconnect from technologies and develop a mixed socialization (virtual and face to face)” (Patrão, 2017; p. 200). They have born already in the time of internet, so they don’t know what it is to live without the internet in their lives. This fact it is related with how children and adolescents occupy their leisure time. Know the play assume different characteristics.

BACKGROUD

Definition

Before we define internet gaming addiction it is important to clarify the features of video games. According to Granic et al. (2014) when comparing with other media (e.g., television) video games imply an interaction. These videogames are developed “for players to actively engage with their systems and for these systems to, in turn, react to players’ agentive behaviors” (p.67).

Internet gaming addiction (IGA) has been defined by DSM 5 as “a pattern of excessive and prolonged Internet gaming that results in a cluster of cognitive and behavioral symptoms, including progressive loss of control over gaming, tolerance, and withdrawal symptoms, analogous to the symptoms of substance use disorders” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 796).

More recently the 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11; 2018) argued that gaming disorder:

“is characterised by a pattern of persistent or recurrent gaming behaviour (‘digital gaming’ or ‘video-gaming’), which may be online (i.e., over the internet) or offline, manifested by: 1. impaired control over gaming (e.g., onset, frequency, intensity, duration, termination, context); 2. increasing priority given to gaming to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other life interests and daily activities; and 3. continuation or escalation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences. The pattern of gaming behaviour may be continuous or episodic and recurrent. The pattern of gaming behaviour results in marked distress or significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational, or other important areas of functioning. The gaming behaviour and other features are normally evident over a period of at least 12 months in order for a diagnosis to be assigned, although the required duration may be shortened if all diagnostic requirements are met and symptoms are severe”.

Although gaming disorder may be online or offline, we will focus in this last one. According with a recent systematic review conducted by Paulus et al. (2018) we can find several terms and concepts for “describing the pathological use of computer technology: IGD, Internet addiction, technology-based addiction, pathological technology use, pathological video gaming, pathological Inter-net use, computer addiction, screen addiction, addictions to video games and online role-playing games, game overuse, video game addiction, smartphone addiction, cyber-relationship addiction, net compulsions, information overload, excessive, problem, dependent, pathological, and addicted gamers” (p. 646). However, and according with Gentile et al. (2017) IGD does not required that individuals exhibit symptoms of addiction solely with online video games, it can occur in both. Problematic use can occur in both offline

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