



Review Article

The Nigerian Picture of Gaming Disorder in Adolescents

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Abstract

Gaming has evolved to be an integral part of human activities. For most individuals, an innovation that seeks originally to achieve an easier way of doing things has increasingly become a necessity for living. Different terms have been used in literature to describe abnormal use of internet stimulating activities: internet gaming, smartphone addiction, pathological internet use, etc. The worldwide prevalence of Gaming Disorder is 0.7-27.5% with the highest prevalence recorded in Asia. There is a higher male prevalence for GD and a particular study showed differences in neuroimaging of male and female subjects. Despite the increase of studies on GD and technology-related disorders around the world, this topic remains understudied in Africa. While no exact data currently exists for the prevalence of GD among adolescents in Nigeria, studies have shown that sociocultural differences may not be associated with GD which means that identified statistics, risk factors and clinical features from non-localized studies could apply. As more details of GD continue to surface, researchers, clinicians and policymakers need to focus on this emerging condition, especially in a country like Nigeria, with the aims of obtaining relevant data, developing relevant clinical tools and designing public health policies to manage the disorder with regards to the local population's needs.

Keywords

Gaming Disorder; Adolescents; Nigeria.

Introduction

The advent of computers and their evolutionary transformation over the centuries has had a significant impact on human lives. The evolution of gaming over the past decades parallels that of technological advancements in computing and hardware. There has been a major leap from expensive video consoles of the 1980s to the 1990s to relatively cheap games accessible on smartphones both online and offline. As online games become more popular, gaming clans began to emerge all over the world. A clan, guild or faction is an organized group of players that regularly play together in multiplayer games. Such groups range from a few friends to thousands of players with a broad range of organizational structure, goals and members.

Gaming is more than just a booming entertainment business. It is reshaping the way gamers interact with their world and beginning to create a cankerworm of challenges for clinicians, researchers and policymakers. Generally, associated mental health phenomena with problematic use of digital media have been researched and studied

since the late 20th century. Although there are no standardized terms used to refer to compulsive digital media use, digital addiction or dependencies are used to describe the disorders associated with internet and smartphone use. Common digital addiction disorders are (but unlimited to) online gambling, cyber bullying and online gaming disorders also called internet gaming disorders or for short, gaming disorders.

Evolution of Gaming Disorder in Adolescents

In 2018, Gaming Disorder (GD) was defined in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) publication of the WHO as a pattern of gaming behavior characterized by impaired control over other activities to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other interests and daily activities and continuation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences [1]. Many countries are recognizing GD as a public health issue and policies have been put in places by countries such as China, Switzerland and Iran to deal with it [2]. Many clinics have been established in many Asia countries where clinical services for GD are most developed. Clinics are also being developed in North America and Europe [3].

Gaming Disorder is a topic of controversies. This is mainly due to a lack of consensus on diagnostic criteria. There are questions on whether GD should be considered a disorder in the face of insufficient evidence because there could be a premature application of diagnosis in the medical community and treatment of false positives leading to the stigmatization of heavy gamers who may not be unwell. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of mental disorders, DSM (a publication of the American Psychiatry Association) in its fifth edition (DSM-5) in 2013 recognized GD as a condition for further research acknowledging that GD is a real issue but that criteria for classification needed to be sufficient to classify GD as a unique mental disorder [5].

It is expected of gaming to be more popular with young people. In the US, 61% of gamers were 35 years and younger and a third of these are under 18 years [6]. The definition of an adolescent is a young person in the process of developing from a child to an adult. WHO categorizes individuals in the 10 to 19-year age group as adolescents and according to WHO. The categorization based on age is only a rough marker that leaves no room for the physical, psychological or cultural expression which may begin at an earlier age or end at a later one. It is increasingly being accepted that adolescence is a stage requiring special care and attention. This is seen in the emergence of such specialized care as Adolescence medicine or Transitional Medicine.

The adolescent stage is a period of unprecedented development of the body's anatomy and physiology, and social interaction. The boy or girl becomes 'aware' of his environments - the sociocultural, economic and interpersonal elements, and begins to learn to respond to it in a broad range of ways. The adolescent suddenly finds himself in a complex world and tries to make sense of his role in it. This is also a stage of cognitive development and the adolescent goes ahead to make decisions for him even when the supposed consequences of such actions have been mentioned or depicted to him before. The adolescent explores his world beginning to recognize his passions

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