Problematic Internet Use and Problematic Online Gaming Are Not the Same: Findings from a Large Nationally Representative Adolescent Sample

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## Authors

Király O.;Griffiths M.;Urbán R.;Farkas J.;Kökönyei G.;Elekes Z.;Tamás D.;Demetrovics Z.

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## Sample

4875 Hungarian adolescents from grade 9 and 10 (mean age 16.4). Data was collected in the framework of the ESPAD study in 2011.

## Implications For Stakeholders About

# Abstract

There is an ongoing debate in the literature whether problematic Internet use (PIU) and problematic online gaming (POG) are two distinct conceptual and nosological entities or whether they are the same. The present study contributes to this question by examining the interrelationship and the overlap between PIU and POG in terms of sex, school achievement, time spent using the Internet and/or online gaming, psychological well-being, and preferred online activities. Questionnaires assessing these variables were administered to a nationally representative sample of adolescent gamers (N= 2,073; Mage = 16.4 years, SD = 0.87; 68.4% male). Data showed that Internet use was a common activity among adolescents, while online gaming was engaged in by a considerably
smaller group. Similarly, more adolescents met the criteria for PIU than for POG, and a small group of adolescents showed symptoms of both problem behaviors. The most notable difference between the two problem behaviors was in terms of sex. POG was much more strongly associated with being male. Self-esteem had low effect sizes on both behaviors, while depressive symptoms were associated with both PIU and POG, affecting PIU slightly more.
In terms of preferred online activities, PIU was positively associated with online gaming, online chatting, and social networking, while POG was only associated with online gaming. Based on our findings, POG appears to be a conceptually different behavior from PIU, and therefore the data support the notion that Internet Addiction Disorder and Internet Gaming Disorder are separate nosological entities.

# Outcome

More respondents could be characterized with PIU than with POG, and some with both. The applied statistical models demonstrated a distinction between the two usage types. The most important differences were in relation to f sex and time spent on the two activities. POG are more associated with being male, The association of PIU with time spent using the Internet was stronger than its association with playing online games. While online gaming was the only online activity mentioned as one of the frequently practiced online activities in case of POG, PIU was also positively associated with online gaming, online chatting, and social networking.

"The multivariate multiple regression model also demonstrated a distinction between the two online behaviors. The most notable differences were in terms of sex and time spent on the two activities. While both PIU and POG were associated with being male, the effect size was much larger for POG. The association of PIU with time spent using the Internet was stronger than its association with playing online games, while the association of POG with time spent on online gaming was stronger than its association with time spent using the Internet. The distinction is also demonstrated by different preference for online applications. While online gaming was the only online activity mentioned as one of the frequently practiced online activities for POG, PIU was positively associated with online gaming, online chatting, and social networking. However, the very low effect size of social networking on PIU was surprising. One explanation might be that the popularity of social networking sites in Hungary began to grow exponentially following the period of this data collection. The recent increase of smart phone ownership might also change the findings of the upcoming ESPAD research in relation to activities such as social networking." (Kiraly et al.: Problematic Internet Use and Problematic Online Gaming Are Not the Same: Findings from a Large Nationally Representative Adolescent Sample, CYBERPSYCHOLOGY, BEHAVIOR, AND SOCIAL NETWORKING Volume 17, Number 12, 2014, p: 753)