Normative, passionate, or problematic? Identification of adolescent gamer subtypes over time

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## Sample

"In total 1,928 adolescents participated at T1 (education: 50% lower, 25% middle, and 25% high), and 1,420 at T2 (74%; education: 54% lower, 31% middle, and 15% high). The mean age was 13.3 (SD = 0.91), and 57% were boys at T1." (Peeters et al., 2019, p. 576)

# Abstract

Background and aims
For most youngsters, gaming is a fun and innocent leisure activity. However, some adolescents are prone to develop problematic gaming behavior. It is therefore important to have a comprehensive understanding of psychosocial and game-related characteristics that differentiate highly engaged gamers from problematic gamers. To that end, this study evaluated the stability and consistency of Internet gaming criteria (as suggested by the DSM-5) and psychosocial characteristics in a two-wave longitudinal study including 1928 young adolescents (mean age = 13.3 years, SD = 0.91, 57% boys).

Methods
A confirmatory factor analysis revealed good stability of the Internet gaming disorder (IGD) construct over time. Latent class analyses revealed three classes for boys (recreational, engaged, and problematic) and two classes for girls (recreational and engaged).

Results
Significant differences between classes emerged for problem criteria (conflict and problems in social life), gaming duration, impulsivity, social competence, and attention/hyperactivity. The absence of a problematic gaming class for girls suggests that girls are less likely to develop problematic gaming behavior.

Discussion
The IGD criteria as proposed by the DSM-5 are a helpful tool to identify problematic gamers, although the results of this study suggest that using a strict cut-off point might result in false positives, particularly for boys. Problem criteria appeared to be the most sensitive and specific in identifying the problematic gamer, whereas escapism criteria were the least specific and sensitive. Careful consideration of the current proposed criteria to identify problematic gaming behavior could benefit the research and clinical field.

# Outcome

"With respect to our first aim, we found that all IGD symptoms contributed relatively well to the latent factor of problematic gaming behavior. This latent factor was invariant over time suggesting that the construct can be assessed consistently over time among adolescents." (Peeters et al., 2019, p. 580)
"Three groups of male gamers were distinguished: (a) recreational gamers, (b) engaged gamers, and (c) problematic gamers. For females, a two-group solution fitted the data best with (a) recreational gamers and (b) engaged gamers. Using a cut-off point for the IGD
symptoms, as suggested for an IGD diagnosis congruent with the DSM-5 (Petry, Rehbein, Ko, O’Brien, 2015), appeared to be particularly problematic for the male engaged gamers. A total of 29 boys at T1 and 8 boys at T2 would have been identified as having an IGD on basis of the DSM-5 cut-off point while the LCAs identified these boys as engaged gamers." (Peeters et al., 2019, p. 580-581)
"Escapism symptoms might therefore not identify adolescents at risk of problematic gaming but may rather be a reflection of another underlying problem." (Peeters et al., 2019, p. 581)
"With respect to gaming behavior, the classes for males mainly differed with regard to hours spend on gaming per week (highest among the problematic gamers) and self-declared game addiction (problematic gamers perceived their behavior more often as addicted compared to the engaged gamers). (Peeters et al., 2019, p. 582)
"With respect to psychosocial differences between types of gamers, for males, it was found that problematic gamers were less socially competent and more impulsive compared to the engaged and recreational gamers. For females, compared to the recreational gamers, the engaged gamers were less socially competent and more impulsive." (Peeters et al., 2019, p. 582)
"Both difficulties on a personal level, and difficulties on an intrapersonal level, such as experiencing problems with friendship (formation) and social interaction, appear to be
important risk factors for problematic gaming. Weaker social competence was more common among the (more) problematic gamers (i.e., engaged gamers for females)." (Peeters et al., 2019, p. 582)