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Study compares frameworks used to diagnose gaming disorder

In a bid to assist clinical diagnosis of gaming disorder a University of Tasmania researcher has collaborated on an international study comparing two of the world's most recognised diagnostic frameworks.

Gaming disorder (also informally known as video game addiction) was only officially recognised as a mental illness earlier this year by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

To aid in diagnosing this disorder, mental health professionals and researchers adopt one of two commonly used frameworks, either a model developed by the American Psychiatric Association or another by WHO.

College of Health and Medicine Division of Psychology researcher Dr Halley Pontes collaborated with colleagues Professor Christian Montag (Ulm University) and Dr Bruno Schivinski (Birkbeck, University of London) on the international analysis, comparing the effectiveness of the two diagnostic frameworks.

"The APA and WHO have independently developed clinical diagnostic frameworks which can help practitioners assess the illness – gaming disorder," Dr Pontes said.

"In our large-scale study, we looked at the effectiveness of each framework in relation to depression, loneliness and attention problems alongside gaming motives.

"We found that depending on how gaming disorder is diagnosed, according to which diagnostic framework is adopted, this can lead to different results in terms of severity and extent of mental health effects experienced by gamers.

"Most importantly, we found that when estimating prevalence rates of gaming disorder, this can vary simply because of the choice of diagnostic framework, which is a major problem for clinical practise.

"For example, it was found in the study that in addition to contributing to detrimental mental health on gamers, gaming disorder rates in specific

populations and the way in which practitioners diagnose this disorder, can be hampered by their choice of the diagnostic framework, ultimately leading to misdiagnose in some rare cases.

“Due to the preliminary nature of the two existing diagnostic frameworks for gaming disorder and the findings of the study, caution is advised when diagnosing this disorder as further refinement to the diagnostic frameworks will likely occur in the near future.”

The paper, '[Psychopathological symptoms and gaming motives in disordered gaming: A psychometric comparison between the WHO and APA diagnostic frameworks](#)', was published in the *Journal of Clinical Medicine*.

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