What this research is about

Excessive gaming is a growing public health concern, especially for young people. Researchers have developed tools to assess motives or reasons for playing video games. However, most tools group all gamers into the same category. Some tools have been developed for a specific game genre. Thus, they may ignore that gamers play electronic video games for very different reasons.

The Gambling Motives Questionnaire-Revised (GMQ-R) measures four types of motives for gambling: (1) coping motivation – gambling to reduce or avoid negative emotions; (2) enhancement motivation – gambling to increase positive emotions; (3) social motivation – gambling for social connections; and (4) self-gratification – gambling to indulge or satisfy one’s own desires.

There are many similarities between gambling and electronic gaming. For example, both activities reward players at an unpredictable rate and use sound and light effects to attract players. They have similar negative effects after excessive play. These include poor mental health, poor sleeping habits, and poor performance at school and work. Therefore, the four types of gambling motivations may also be relevant to gaming. The current study adapted the GMQ-R to develop the Electronic Gaming Motives Questionnaire (EGMQ) as a tool to measure motivation for gaming.

What the researcher did

Participants were 853 individuals serving in the Norwegian Armed Forces between 2013 and 2015. All participants had played electronic games during the past 6 months. They completed the EGMQ and other assessments of gaming behaviours. These

What you need to know

The Gambling Motives Questionnaire-Revised (GMQ-R) was adapted to measure motivation for playing video games. The new Electronic Gaming Motives Questionnaire (EGMQ) was developed to assess four motives for gaming: coping, enhancement, social, and self-gratification. Aside from gender, gaming motives predicted gaming behaviours. Some motives more strongly predicted loss of control (coping) and gaming problems (coping and self-gratification) compared to other motives (enhancement and social). Thus, individuals who played for coping or self-gratification reasons were more likely to have gaming problems. Those who played for coping reasons were also more likely to lose control. Overall, the results supported that the EGMQ is a valid tool to measure motives for gaming and may be useful in the treatment of gaming addiction.

What the researcher found

included variety of games played during the last month, hours spent on gaming in a typical week, loss of control, and gaming problems (e.g., thinking about gambling all the time, feeling withdrawal when not gaming). Participants also completed measures of well-being, including loneliness, proneness to boredom, and depression.

The researchers used confirmatory factor analysis to determine the number of gaming motivations that emerged from the EGMQ. They then evaluated how well the EGMQ could predict gaming behaviours and how it was related to well-being.
Confirmatory factor analysis supported the four-factor structure of the EGMQ. That is, it supported four types of motivations for playing video games: enhancement, social, coping, and self-gratification.

Gender predicted all gaming behaviours. Thus, men were more likely to play a wider variety of games, spend more hours per week on gaming, feel loss of control, and have gaming problems. The four gaming motives related differently to different gaming behaviours. Coping and self-gratification predicted gaming problems, and coping predicted loss of control. This means that if participants played video games primarily for coping or self-gratification, they were more likely to have gaming problems. Participants who played to cope with negative emotions were also more likely to feel loss of control. Social and enhancement motives predicted playing a variety of games. This means that if participants played video games primarily because of social or enhancement motivations, they were more likely to play a variety of different games. But they were less likely to lose control or develop gaming problems.

The four gaming motives related differently to well-being. Participants who were prone to boredom, lonely, or depressed tended to play video games to cope or for self-gratification. Social motivation was only related to boredom. Enhancement motivation was predicted by boredom and depression.

How you can use this research

Clinicians and treatment providers could use the EGMQ to assess and identify different motives for gaming. This would facilitate targeted treatment for people with gaming addiction. Future research should attempt to replicate the present findings and determine whether the four gaming motives are also relevant in different populations of gamers.

About the Researcher

Helga Myrseth and Olav Kjellevold Olsen are affiliated with the Department of Psychosocial Science at the University of Bergen in Norway. Guy Notelaers and Leif Åge Strand are affiliated with the Norwegian Armed Forces Medical Services at the Cancer Registry of Norway in Norway. Einar Kristian Borud is affiliated with the Norwegian Armed Forces Medical Services at The Arctic University of Norway in Norway. For more information about this study, please contact Helga Myrseth at helga.myrseth@uib.no.

Citation


Keywords

Assessment, coping motivation, electronic gaming motives questionnaire, enhancement motivation, gaming, gaming motives, motivation, self-gratification motivation, social motivation

Gambling Research Exchange Ontario (GREO)

Gambling Research Exchange Ontario (GREO) has partnered with the Knowledge Mobilization Unit at York University to produce Research Snapshots. GREO is an independent knowledge translation and exchange organization that aims to eliminate harm from gambling. Our goal is to support evidence-informed decision making in responsible gambling policies, standards and practices. The work we do is intended for researchers, policy makers, gambling regulators and operators, and treatment and prevention service providers.

Learn more about GREO by visiting greo.ca or emailing info@greo.ca.