Video game addiction, ADHD symptomatology, and video game reinforcement

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Abstract

BACKGROUND:
Up to 23% of people who play video games report symptoms of addiction. Individuals with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) may be at increased risk for video game addiction, especially when playing games with more reinforcing properties.

OBJECTIVES:
The current study tested whether level of video game reinforcement (type of game) places individuals with greater ADHD symptom severity at higher risk for developing video game addiction.

METHODS:
Adult video game players (N = 2,801; Mean age = 22.43, SD = 4.70; 93.30% male; 82.80% Caucasian) completed an online survey. Hierarchical multiple linear regression analyses were used to test type of game, ADHD symptom severity, and the interaction between type of game and ADHD symptomatology as predictors of video game addiction severity, after controlling for age, gender, and weekly time spent playing video games.

RESULTS:
ADHD symptom severity was positively associated with increased addiction severity (b = .73 and .68, ps < 0.001). Type of game played or preferred the most was not associated with addiction severity, ps > .05. The relationship between ADHD symptom severity and addiction severity did not depend on the type of video game played or preferred most, ps > .05.

CONCLUSION:
Gamers who have greater ADHD symptom severity may be at greater risk for developing symptoms of video game addiction and its negative consequences, regardless of type of video game played or preferred most. Individuals who report ADHD symptomatology and also identify as gamers may benefit from psychoeducation about the potential risk for problematic play.