
NEWSLETTER

The Cost of Virtual Reality in Health: An Empirical Analysis of the Impact of Online Gaming on Adolescent Mental Health

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AMONG MANY factors contributing to adolescents' mental health issues, the prevalence of online gaming is considered as a major one in the literature. This article is an analysis of the effect of online gaming on teenager mental health with a close examination of various factors influencing the effect including personal characteristics of the student and peer, family, and school characteristics. The research is based on the data from the China Education Panel Survey (CEPS) 2014-2015. The seventh and ninth graders from 438 classes in 112 schools were included in the sample.

Research findings:

- In general, online gaming was unfavorable to adolescents' mental health development. After controlling for other factors, the bigger amount of time the student spent on online gaming, the poorer mental health they had.
- Regarding student personal factors, there was no gender difference in their mental health; students with Hukou in rural areas had lower levels of mental health; student academic performance was positively related to their mental health levels; student misconduct was a negative predictor of their mental health. After controlling for these personal factors, online gaming time negatively predicted adolescents' mental health levels.
- The school's ranking and the average academic level of the class were negatively related to the student's mental health state. This may be due to the intense academic competition among higher-achieving peers. After controlling for peer characteristics-related factors, the intensity of online gaming was negatively predictive of the student's mental health state.
- The parent-child relationship and family SES were significantly and positively related to student mental health; Parental supervision was negatively but not significantly related to student mental health; Living with parents or not directly correlated with the adolescent child's mental health state. After controlling

for these family-related factors, there was an inverse relation between online gaming time and adolescent mental health.

- After controlling for school-related factors, such as the school location and school type, the intensity of online gaming was significantly and negatively related to the student's mental health level.

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