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## The Impact of Gaming as an Adolescent Trauma Coping Strategy

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**Abstract:** This secondary study investigated the relationship among childhood trauma, emotional dysregulation, and teenage internet gaming disorder (IGD). It brought attention to the psychological processes, especially when unresolved trauma was present, that led teenagers to turn to internet gaming to cope. In this study, the adaptive and maladaptive effects of gaming were assessed using various theoretical models. The results showed that while gaming could provide momentary solace and an emotional diversion, over-reliance on it can impede emotional growth and exacerbate IGD. The study emphasised the value of helping adolescents who are trying to cope with trauma develop healthy coping mechanisms and emotional resilience.

**Keywords:** *Secondary Research, Emotional Dysregulation, Coping Mechanisms, Psychological Resilience, Internet Gaming Disorder, And Adolescent Trauma*

### 1. Introduction

**Comprehending Adolescent Trauma:** According to American Psychological Association (2017) adolescence is a crucial stage of growth marked by quick changes in one's physical, mental, and cognitive makeup. Adolescents are especially susceptible to trauma during this period, which can have a long-term impact on their psychological health and general wellbeing. Experiences that profoundly impact a person's emotional as well as psychological condition are referred to as trauma, and they frequently cause anxiety, powerlessness, and emotional upheaval. According to a studies adolescents may experience trauma from a number of causes, such as bullying, familial problems, physical or mental abuse, losing someone close to them, and violent incidents. Their capacity to function in day-

to-day life and build wholesome relationships may be severely impacted by these traumatic events, which can result in long-term mental health problems like anxiety, depression, as well as severe PTSD (Briere & Scott, 2015).

***Prevalence:*** There is increasing worry about the high rate of trauma in teenagers. During their formative years, a considerable proportion of teenagers undergo some kind of trauma, according to research. Research shows that about one in three teenagers will experience some form of trauma by the time they're older adults, in varied degrees of intensity (Finkelhor, et al., 2015). These traumatic events have the potential to significantly affect their psychological as well as emotional growth, which frequently results in mental health issues. It is obvious how urgent it is to treat teenage trauma since, if left untreated, it can worsen and cause more serious mental health issues that will hinder their capacity to succeed as adults (Rothbaum, et al., 2019).

***Coping Strategies:*** Adolescents who have experienced trauma frequently use a range of coping strategies, both healthy and unhealthy, to try to control their feelings and psychological discomfort (Compas, et al., 2017). Wanting support from friends and family, participating in sports or other physical activities, or using drugs to dull pain are some examples of coping mechanisms. But not every coping strategy works or is healthy. Certain tactics can offer short-term respite, but they might also encourage avoidance or make underlying problems worse. In order to promote resilience and healing, it is critical to comprehend how teenagers deal with their emotional suffering and locate healthy outlets. Alternative coping strategies, like digital tools, are becoming more and more popular since traditional coping techniques might not always offer enough assistance (Burgess, et al., 2017).

***Adolescents' Growing Interest in Gaming:*** Video gaming has changed over the last few decades from being a hobby to a popular trend that has ingrained itself into the lives of many adolescents. With millions of teenagers worldwide playing video games on consoles, PCs, or mobile devices, the industry of video gaming has developed quickly (Anderson & Dill., 2000). These days, video games provide a dynamic, engaging platform that caters to a broad range of interests and inclinations, offering much more than just amusement. Because it provides them with pleasure, involvement, and a sense of being a part of something, gaming has taken centre stage in the daily lives of many teenagers (Lenhart, et al., 2015). Given the growing popularity of gaming, it is critical to comprehend its possible effects on mental health.

***Using Video Games as a Trauma Coping Mechanism:*** The use of gaming as a coping strategy by traumatized adolescents is one of the newer topics of study. Some people find that playing video games helps them temporarily forget about the burden of real-world problems and escape the emotional suffering caused by traumatic events (Kuss & Griffiths., 2017). Playing video games can provide teenagers a sense of power, a sense of achievement, or even the opportunity to form deep social bonds through online contacts (Russoniello, et al., 2009). Additionally, games could offer a secure, non-threatening environment for examining feelings and difficulties in ways that might not be possible in real life. While some teenagers find comfort in playing video games, there are worries that it may encourage excessive escapism, reliance, or avoidance, which could impede the healing process (Van Rooij, et al., 2018). Therefore, it is critical for parents, teachers, and healthcare professionals to comprehend the subtleties of how gaming functions as a coping method.

***Gaming's Psychological Effects on Adolescents:*** The psychological effects of gaming on teenagers are a complicated topic, especially for those who utilise it as a coping strategy. Adolescents may benefit from gaming as a stress reliever and emotional diversion, since it gives them a way to express their negative feelings and gives them a sense of accomplishment through in-game progression (Przybylski & Weinstein., 2017). Certain video game genres, particularly those that encourage creativity, problem-solving, or teamwork, may benefit mood and cognitive development, according to research (Granic, et al., 2014). However, overindulging in video games or using them as a coping mechanism for emotions and thoughts related to trauma can have detrimental effects, including social isolation, sleep issues, and a lack of interest in real-world issues (Gentile, et al., 2011). Adolescents' long-term mental health depends on finding a balance between playing games as a constructive coping mechanism and avoiding relying too much on them.

***Purpose and Significance of this Study:*** This secondary research aims to investigate how video games might be used as a coping strategy by traumatized adolescents. The purpose of this study is to investigate the psychological impacts of gaming, in the context of trauma healing. This study is important not just for mental health practitioners but also for parents, teachers, and legislators since it can inform suggestions and strategies for the positive use of gaming in trauma rehabilitation. In the end, investigating the intricate connection between trauma and gaming will help us better understand how teenagers might use digital technologies to effectively and healthily manage their emotional pain.

## 2. Historical Background

Video game use as a coping strategy for trauma, especially among teenagers, is a relatively recent phenomenon linked to the growth of digital technology, gaming culture, and a greater awareness of coping mechanisms and psychological resilience. Trauma has traditionally been viewed through the prism of mental and physical suffering, frequently brought on by incidents like abuse, assault, or loss. Traditional techniques including psychotherapy, medicine, and community support were the mainstays of trauma treatment for a long time. However, there was a discernible change in the way people, particularly people in their adolescence, dealt with trauma in the latter half of the 20th century as interactive entertainment devices gained popularity. Originally created as a way of obtaining pleasure, video games have evolved into tools for young people going through challenging times to control their emotions and psychologically escape.

***Video Games and Entertainment: Early Developments:*** The first arcade games to be sold commercially appeared in the 1970s, while the evolution of video games began in the beginning of the 1950s and 1960s. Pong that came out in 1972 as well as Space Invaders in 1978 were two games that popularised the idea of interactive digital entertainment. Nevertheless, video games were not extensively available to teenagers till the years 1980 and 1990, when consoles for home and computer games became readily available. Early games had little psychological depth or narrative intricacy and were mostly intended for pleasure.

Video game creation became more complex as technology advanced, and narrative-driven experiences emerged as a key component. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, video games like Final Fantasy and the Game of Zelda started to offer intricate plots that let users lose themselves in various worlds. For a lot of players, especially those going through difficult times or experiencing anguish, video games serve as a form of escape due to the deeper relationship with the video game characters, the intricate plots, and the power over the narrative's conclusion.

***Adolescence and Gaming:*** Identity creation, heightened independence, and profound emotional experiences are hallmarks of adolescence, a crucial developmental stage. Additionally, people are more susceptible to the negative impacts of trauma during this time, which can include the death of a loved one, exposure to violence or harassment or psychological problems. Managing this kind of trauma during this time might affect one's mental and emotional health for a long time.

As knowledge of adolescent trauma increased in the 1990s, so did the accessibility and sophistication of video games. Researchers specifically started examining how teenagers

used media, such as music, video games, and television, to deal with interpersonal issues. The emergence of internet gaming throughout the period between the years 1990 and 2000 marked a significant change since it allowed young gamers to connect with people virtually, create communities, and discover friendship or a feeling of belonging—often serving as an escape from tragedy in the real world.

The role of video games in teenage coping mechanisms was examined in a growing corpus of research in the 2000s; some of these studies suggested that gaming could be useful platforms for expressing emotions. According to these studies, games can be used as a stress reduction and trauma management technique in addition to being a source of enjoyment. This was especially true of multiplayer online games like Fortnite in 2017, which provide a safe environment for teenagers to interact with others and deal with personal problems by taking on different personas or roles.

***The Growth of Games Coping Strategies:*** The idea of playing games as a way of dealing with emotions ended up being an area of demand in psychological research by the 2010s, when it was realised that video games could be used as a therapeutic way in the care of trauma. From childhood abuse to the emotional fallout from bullying or violence, more and more studies came out examining how gaming could serve as a coping method for younger people dealing with various forms of trauma. Teenagers, especially those who were dealing with prolonged stress, anxiousness, or depressive symptoms, found comfort in video gaming not only as a diversion, but as a means of actively managing their emotions and processing difficult feelings.

Because of their immersive qualities, video games, especially those in the role-playing and action-adventure genres allow players to temporarily escape the hardships of the real world and enter a virtual world where they have influence over their choices and results. Teenagers dealing with trauma found that this feeling of control, particularly in games that call for strategic thinking or problem-solving, helped them temporarily regain authority over their daily affairs when their real-life circumstances felt overwhelming chaos or unmanageable.

Teenagers were also able to connect with others through video games. Players were able to communicate and build deep connections with other players using the online multiplayer features of many of the most well-known games. This conversation was particularly crucial for people who felt alone because of their trauma. In gaming situations, it has become typical for teenagers to create close-knit online communities that provide a space for understanding and support that they might not have received in their immediate physical

surroundings. Players were able to express their personal stories and find solace in a community of people who shared their difficulties thanks to these virtual friendships and interactions, which were essential components of coping mechanisms.

***Social and Psychological Consequences:*** Concerns regarding the long-term psychological effects of using games as a trauma-coping approach existed despite the fact that gaming is becoming more widely accepted as a coping mechanism. While playing video games can help with emotional regulation and provide instant relief, excessive gaming or using them as a coping mechanism to avoid facing trauma might result in maladaptive behaviour. For instance, at the price of their physical and mental well-being, adolescents who use gaming as a way to escape from real-life pressures may develop Internet Gaming Disorder or (IGD), which is currently recognised by the World Health Organisation.

Research on the problem of an addiction to gaming and its connection to trauma coping is still crucial. Teenagers who primarily utilise gaming as a coping mechanism for trauma might be more prone to hazardous gaming behaviour, according to studies. This is particularly true when gaming offers a quicker and more fulfilling release than more healthful coping strategies like therapy, social contact, or physical activity. Researchers, mental health specialists, and educators are therefore constantly debating how to strike a balance between the advantages of gaming and its possible drawbacks.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

Numerous sociological and psychological frameworks can be used to understand how teenagers utilise video games as a coping mechanism for trauma. These conceptual models shed light on the reasons why teenagers might use gaming as a coping mechanism for emotional distress and the ways in which social and personal factors impact this behaviour. Every one of these theories offers a different viewpoint on how gaming might serve as a coping strategy for trauma experienced by adolescents.

***Cognitive Behaviour Therapy or CBT:*** Given by Aaron Beck, this therapeutic approach explains how teens might utilise gaming to cope with trauma-related distress in a helpful way. CBT asserts that people's thoughts, feelings, and actions are interrelated and that unhelpful thought patterns can result in unfavourable emotional and behavioural reactions. Because of their experiences, teenagers who have experienced trauma may come to believe false or unfavourable things about the world, other people, and themselves. Feelings of despair, worry, and powerlessness may result from this.

Video games offer an organised setting where players have authority over their choices and actions, especially those with role-playing or narrative components. These video games provide traumatised teenagers a chance to change or take charge of their story, which helps them confront any negative thought tendencies that might have arisen as a result of their experiences. Because video games are immersive and frequently call for strategic thinking and active problem-solving, they give players a brief break from trauma-related thoughts while also promoting a sense of agency. According to CBT, teens who play video games may be able to temporarily alleviate their emotional distress and improve their coping mechanisms by learning to substitute more adaptive, positive thought patterns for negative, trauma-related ones.

***The Escape Theory:*** This theory was given by John R. Suler, and it is especially pertinent to the study of why teenagers may use video games as a coping mechanism for trauma. This idea contends that people use gaming and other similar hobbies as a psychological diversion from stressful situations, emotional distress, and unfavourable life conditions. The difficulties they encounter in their everyday lives might overwhelm adolescents who have suffered trauma, including assault, harassment, or the death of a loved one. A momentary reprieve from these emotional pressures is offered by video gaming, which have engrossing and participatory universes.

Adolescents may immerse into a fictional universe where they have power over events and results if they play video games. The urge to shield oneself from unpleasant emotions associated with trauma, like fear, grief, or rage, has been linked to the allure of video games. Playing video games gives them the opportunity to "leave" their problematic surroundings and immerse themselves in more fun, fulfilling, and manageable situations. According to Escape Theory, while escape can offer momentary solace, it may also keep them from facing their underlying trauma, which could result in unhealthy coping mechanisms like compulsive gaming.

***Social Learning Theory:*** Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory places a strong emphasis on how behaviour is shaped by modelling, imitation, and observation. Understanding the social component of gaming and how adolescents could use it to cope with traumatic experiences in their understanding of their social surroundings is made easier by this idea. People pick up behaviours by seeing how others behave and what happens to them, especially those they look up to or identify with.

Teenagers may watch their friends, famous people, or imaginary characters play video games as a way to deal with stress or trauma. Adolescents might be attracted to video game

characters who, for instance, overcome obstacles, show resiliency, or display traits they find admirable. They may internalise these coping strategies through observational learning, using gaming as a trauma management strategy. The social aspect of online gaming, which allows users to communicate, connect, and build relationships with others, also supports gaming as a coping mechanism. In this instance, peer pressure may have a big impact on how gaming is viewed and used as a coping mechanism for trauma.

The reasons behind and methods by which adolescents turn to playing games as a coping strategy for trauma are thoroughly explained by these theoretical stances. CBT emphasises how trauma-related negative ideas and feelings can be challenged and replaced with more adaptive thought patterns in the organised environment that gaming provides for teenagers. On the other side, escape theory highlights how gaming serves as a psychological getaway, enabling adolescents to momentarily avoid the emotional suffering and discomfort brought on by their trauma. Finally, by seeing others—like friends or fictitious characters and imitating their actions, adolescents may learn to utilise gaming as a coping mechanism, according to the Social Learning Theory.

Collectively, these ideas imply that gaming serves as a means of self-regulation and emotional escape, assisting teenagers in coping with trauma-related pain. However, they also highlight the risk of maladaptive coping in the event that gaming becomes overly dependent.

#### **4. Research Evidence**

Chamarro et al. (2024) In this research, Adolescent strain, problematic use of the internet (PIU), gaming disorders (GD), emotional control (ER), and risk of suicide (SR) were all examined. It was discovered that stress has a direct impact on SR, along with ER as well as GD serving as mediators. Thirty-seven percent had suicide thoughts, and 34.2% of the 430 teenagers were at high risk for SR. While PIU did not mitigate the association, the study found that stress is an important risk indicator for suicide, especially in teenagers who struggle with emotional management or problematic gaming.

Elkin and Kılınçel (2024) This study sought to investigate the connection between video game addiction, emotion dysregulation, and childhood experiences in college students between the ages of 18 and 35. The findings indicated strong positive associations between emotional control issues and childhood trauma and video game addiction. Particularly, it was discovered that greater video game addiction ratings were substantially correlated with emotional clarity and sexual abuse.

Liu et al. (2024) With a focus on the roles of psychological resilience and depression, this study sought to examine the relationship between Internet Gaming and childhood trauma in Chinese students. An examination of 8,579 students showed that psychological resilience acts as a mitigating factor, modulating the association between trauma in childhood and depressive symptoms, while depression partially mediates the influence of this trauma on IGD. These results underscored the significance of building resilience to lower the risk of IGD and highlighted the psychosocial underpinnings.

Ma et al. (2024) With an emphasis on resilience as a mediating factor, the study sought to investigate the relationship between university students' internet gaming disorder (IGD) and adverse childhood experiences (ACE). These three factors were found to be significantly linked, with resilience acting as a partial mediating factor in the association between IGD and adverse childhood events.

Nurmagandi and Suratmini (2024) This research sought to investigate the link between adolescent addiction to online games and depression. According to an analysis of 11 studies conducted between 2019 and 2023, there is a reciprocal association between sadness and online game addiction, with one potentially causing the other. The study came to the conclusion that in order to prevent depressive disorders and video game addiction, adequate coping mechanisms are required, underscoring the significance of more research on these preventative tactics.

Wang et al. (2024) The study investigated the ways in which early experiences shape gaming goals, with a particular emphasis on their possible association with health issues associated to gaming. It discovered that adverse childhood memories were positively connected with motives for accomplishment and escape, based on data from 2,171 adolescent gamers who played online. The influence of negative experiences on accomplishment motivation was significantly lessened by social support from friends, whereas the relationship between desire to escape and dysfunctional families was strengthened.

Dong et al. (2023) The purpose of this research was to investigate how childhood trauma affects teenage addiction of internet as well as how loneliness and unhealthy coping mechanisms may play a moderating role. Analysis of information of 11,310 junior secondary school pupils in Henan, China, revealed 1,044 teenagers who had experienced trauma as children. The findings showed that IA is directly impacted by childhood trauma and is indirectly made worse by it through the adoption of unhealthy coping mechanisms and a rise in loneliness.

Hua et al. (2023) Examining whether coping strategies influence the relationship of trauma during childhood as well as internet use disorder in Chinese teenagers was the goal of this study. It discovered a positive correlation between IA and sexual abuse, emotional neglect, physical abuse, and emotional abuse. Partially mediating the association between IA and specific forms of trauma in childhood, (physical, psychological, and sexual harassment) were negative coping methods. Adolescents who have experienced trauma, particularly those who have negative coping mechanisms, are more likely to develop the disorder.

Vasudevan et al. (2023) The study sought to determine how common it was for mid-adolescents to play violent video games and how this affected their coping mechanisms and aggressive behaviour. The study, which involved 202 students from southern Indian metropolitan schools between the ages of 14 and 16, discovered that 165 of the participants—mostly men were VVG users. Harassment behaviours and physical violence were considerably higher among VVG users than among non-violent game players, despite no difference in gaming frequency or length. Furthermore, although NVVG users favoured active coping mechanisms, VVG users chose distraction coping mechanisms.

Gundogdu and Eroglu (2022) Adolescents' dissociative symptoms, sleep issues, problematic internet use (PIU), hostility, and addiction to digital games were all examined in this study. The findings indicated that teens who experienced more dissociative symptoms were also more likely to have higher PIU, more aggressiveness, and sleep disorders. Furthermore, compared to teenagers who did not engage in problematic online gaming, those who did exhibited much more dissociative symptoms. The results indicate that PIU, digital gaming addiction, and sleep difficulties may all exacerbate dissociative symptoms in teenagers.

Sheng et al. (2022) The purpose of this research was to investigate the pathophysiology of teenage internet addiction and the function of social support in mitigating the relationship between IA and childhood trauma. The study polled 844 teenagers using a cross-sectional design with descriptive characteristics. The findings demonstrated that IA was directly impacted by early trauma, with social support acting as a moderator. The results emphasise the significance of treating childhood trauma and boosting social support, and they offer theoretical basis for programs aimed at reducing IA in teenagers.

Yuan et al. (2022) Using network analysis, the study sought to investigate the relationship between symptoms of online gaming disorder (IGD) and symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder. Key symptoms, such as "avoiding external reminders" and "anhedonia," and IGD, such as "preoccupation" and "loss of control," were shown to be

fundamental to the networks of 341 Chinese teenagers exposed to a typhoon. Additionally, "conflict due to gaming" and "concentration difficulties" served as bridge symptoms that connected the two diseases.

Caro and Popovac (2021) The study looked at coping self-efficacy and emotion control as predictors and attempted to create a measure of playing games in challenging life circumstances. With 667 gamers taking part, the GDLS scale showed excellent reliability and validity. The results showed that gamers utilise gaming as a coping mechanism for life's challenges, looking for social interaction, achievement, and diversion. According to regression analysis, emotion regulation had no discernible effect on GDLS, while younger age, increased gaming duration, and weaker coping self-efficacy were predictive.

Cui and Chi (2021) This study sought to determine how Chinese adolescents' Internet addiction during COVID-19 lockdowns is influenced by peer support, resiliency, and symptoms of PTSD. It was discovered that, in both direct and indirect ways, social support was inversely correlated with Internet addiction through the mediation effects of PTSD symptoms and resilience. The study emphasises the value of social support in lowering Internet addiction, and it finds that PTSD symptoms and resilience play a significant role in this relationship.

Ferguson et al. (2021) The purpose of this study was to investigate teenage coping mechanisms and feelings during the initial COVID-19 pandemic wave. Three major emotional themes emerged from the study's analysis of 1164 Canadian teenagers' responses: the emotional toll of the epidemic, its disconnections, and some of its positive elements. The teens' primary coping mechanisms were leisure or health-promoting activities, as well as online and outdoor connections. The findings demonstrated how teenagers overcame emotional obstacles by figuring out novel strategies to maintain relationships and practise self-care.

Garakani et al. (2021) The study sought to determine how the demographics, health, and behaviours of adolescents are impacted by gaming as a coping mechanism for anxiety. The findings indicated that playing games for this reason was more prevalent among Asian and Hispanic teenagers and males, and that it was associated with greater levels of violent behaviour, lower academic performance, less involvement in extracurricular activities, increased substance use, and depression. These results underline how much more study is required to fully comprehend these connections and create successful intervention plans.

Jhone et al. (2021) Based on the I-PACE model, the study sought to determine if stress modulates the association between detrimental childhood experiences (ACEs) and

internet gaming disorder (IGD). Results from a survey of 3,593 teenagers in South Korea revealed that ACEs significantly raised levels of stress, which in turn led to higher IGD scores. The investigation demonstrated the essential function that stress plays in this connection by showing how it partially controlled the effects of ACEs on IGD.

She et al. (2021) Examining the mediation effects of peer support, educational pressure, and maladaptive emotion regulation, this study sought to determine how COVID-19 stress associated with education and online learning affected depressive disorders and Internet gaming disorder, or IGD, in teenagers. The findings showed that peer support, pressure from school, and maladaptive regulation of emotions acted as mediators in the indirect relationships between COVID-19 stress and depression and IGD. Additionally, the study discovered that some correlations, including the one between academic stress and COVID-19 stress, were more pronounced in women than in men.

Xu et al. (2021). With an emphasis on the dangers of excessive usage and addiction, this review sought to examine recent longitudinal research on drinking and playing games throughout the pandemic. The results demonstrated that excessive gaming and drinking, which are fuelled by elevated stress and anxiety, represent a serious risk to mental health. In order to enhance psychological and physical well-being, the results highlighted the necessity of mental health mitigation techniques, such as promoting physical activity, social engagement, and teamwork.

Melodia, Canale and Griffiths (2020) The goal of this systematic analysis was to give a thorough overview of how escape intentions and avoidance coping play a part in harmful internet gaming. Escape and coping with avoidance were found to be both predictors of IGD and to mediate the relationship between problematic online gaming and a number of psychological characteristics, including anxiety, loneliness, self-esteem, and self-concept.

Shi et al. (2020) This study sought to investigate the causes underlying IGD, and the interplay of childhood trauma, anxiety, and depression in college students. In order to examine the impact of trauma in childhood on IGD related to anxiety and depression, the study, which involved 922 freshmen in China, employed structural equation modelling (SEM). The findings indicated that childhood trauma affected computer gaming behaviour directly (0.11) and indirectly (via anxiety and sadness). Furthermore, a strong correlation between anxiety and depression was discovered, underscoring their crucial function in moderating the influence of childhood stress on IGD.

Blasi et al. (2019) The study sought to investigate the ways in which emotion dysregulation affects problematic gaming behaviours as well as escape motivations. It

evaluated 390 gamers of World of Warcraft and tested whether escapism mediates the link between problematic gaming and emotion dysregulation using structural equation modelling. The findings demonstrated that, with escapism acting as a partial mediating factor, issues with regulating emotions anticipated both problematic gaming and escapism intentions. This implies that both harmful gaming behaviours and escapism are significantly influenced by emotion dysregulation.

Kircaburun, Griffiths and Billieux (2019) This study sought to determine whether IGD was directly or indirectly associated with emotional trauma, sadness, loneliness, social anxiety, body image dissatisfaction, and self-esteem. In all, 242 internet players took part. With the exception of body image dissatisfaction, the results showed a substantial correlation between IGD and every other measure. After controlling for age, gender, and gaming hours, path analysis revealed an indirect link between childhood emotional stress and IGD mediated depressive symptoms. According to the study's findings, depressive symptoms are a significant risk factor for IGD, and internet gamers with previous experiences of psychological abuse or abandonment had greater levels of both.

Plante et al. (2019) The idea that people who take up gaming as a coping strategy and have higher levels of anxiety are more prone to developing a video game addiction was examined in this study. Using video games as a stress reliever is a strong predictor of symptoms of addiction to video games, regardless of how often you play or other unhealthy coping mechanisms, according to two survey studies with college participants. Anxiety related to mental illness makes people more likely to resort to video gaming for dealing, which raises the likelihood of addiction, according to a serial mediation analysis.

Paulus et al. (2018) Focussing on descriptions, symptoms, frequency, and aetiology, the review sought to give an overall picture of IGD. Although the DSM-5 classification is a good starting point for diagnosing IGD, it has drawbacks, according to the analysis, which examined academic research between 1991 and 2016. Both internal and external factors—such as social skills and family background as well as certain game-related aspects have a role in the development of IGD. Internal factors include self-regulation and decision-making problems. An integrated model was put up in the review to explain how these factors interact in a complex way to cause IGD.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

This secondary research sought to investigate the connection between teenage internet gaming disorder, emotional regulation, and early trauma. According to the results, emotional

dysregulation was a key mediating factor in the link between internet gaming disorder symptoms and adolescents who had experienced childhood trauma. These findings are consistent with earlier studies that found a connection between maladaptive coping mechanisms like a concerning amount of gaming and early negative experiences (Kircaburun et al., 2019; Shi et al., 2020).

One of the major themes was gaming being used as a way to cope with stressful situations and avoid confronting difficult emotions that surfaced from the literature. Highlighted by Plante et al. (2019) and Blasi et al. (2019) the studies showed that individuals in their adolescence, particularly those with traumatic experiences, may use gaming as a coping mechanism or way to avoid bad emotions. This is in line with the results of the present investigation, which showed that symptoms of gaming disorder were significantly predicted by emotional dysregulation. Also, Melodia et al. (2020) highlighted that emotional vulnerability may make people turn to online gaming as a way to cope with psychological pain, underscoring the role of escape motives and avoidant coping in the aetiology of gaming illness.

The mediation role of psychological factors in the trauma–gaming disorder route, specifically coping strategies, resilience, and social support, is another noteworthy issue. Studies conducted by Dong et al. (2023) & Hua et al. (2023) have indicated that the relationship of online gaming with negative childhood experiences is largely mediated by negative coping strategies and loneliness. Also, previous studies by Cui and Chi (2021) as well as, Sheng et al. (2022) discovered that resilience and social support can mitigate this effect, offering safeguards that lessen the possibility that gaming will turn maladaptive. The current study supports previous findings by indicating that adolescents who have experienced trauma are more likely to develop a gaming disorder as a result of poor emotional regulation, which is a type of negative coping.

Moreover, COVID-19-specific stressors and gendered experiences also seemed to contribute to the exacerbation of these behaviours. Ferguson et al. (2021) and She et al. (2021) explained how pandemic-related disruptions (such closing schools and being isolated) fuelled a rise in gaming as a coping mechanism for worry and uncertainty, especially among teenagers with low emotional reserves. Even though the current study did not concentrate on pandemic-related issues, these more general findings offer more background information for comprehending the emotional weight that today's youth bear.

Another theme that was noticed was emotional dysregulation is also a transdiagnostic risk factor, highlighted in research conducted by Chamarro et al. (2024) and Elkin and

Kılınçel (2024), which emphasises the urgent need for early interventions that encourage being more aware of our emotions, how we regulate them, and trauma-focused strategies. Unresolved trauma in adolescents can cause them to struggle with emotional intensity and impulse control, which makes them particularly vulnerable to hazardous behaviours like excessive gaming.

In summation, this study emphasised the important connection between emotional dysregulation, early trauma, and adolescent internet gaming disorder (IGD). It showed that those who have experienced childhood trauma are more prone to engage in internet gaming as a dysfunctional coping method, which can worsen issues with emotional regulation and result in IGD. The study also highlighted how social support and resilience might reduce the likelihood of gaming disorder.

These results highlighted the significance of early therapies that focus on regulating emotions and encouraging appropriate coping mechanisms in order to prevent IGD, particularly in adolescents from traumatic backgrounds. Future studies should look at the long-term impacts of traumatic childhood experiences on gaming behaviours and customised therapies to meet the special requirements of young people who are at risk.

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