

Perceived social support and online video games addiction: gender differences in Portuguese adolescents?

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND: The perception of social support and online video games addiction appear to be important factors to be taken into account in promoting the health and well-being of adolescents^[1,2].

OBJECTIVES: The aim of this study is to evaluate a sample of adolescents regarding perceived social support and dependence on video games, exploring the gender differences in these variables.

METHODS: A convenience sample of 135 adolescents (64 females, 71 males), aged between 12 and 18 years (M = 15.28; SD = 1.37) was evaluated by the Portuguese version of the Internet Gaming Disorder Scale - Short-Form (IGDS9-SF)^[3] and by the Social Support Satisfaction Scale (ESSS)^[4]. Mann-Whitney U test was used to explore gender differences. **RESULTS:** The adolescents of the sample scored between 9 and 34 (M = 13.63; SD = 5.74) - below the cutoff point of the scale: 36. In the ESSS, results ranged from 23 to 75 (M = 58.39; SD = 10.79). Male adolescents tend to present higher scores in IGDS9-SF (U = 3865; $p < .001$). Regarding ESSS dimensions of satisfaction with friends, family satisfaction and social activities no differences were found between male and female adolescents. Regarding ESSS Intimacy dimension, male adolescents tend to present higher scores (U = 2751.5, $p = .034$). **CONCLUSIONS:** Despite the growing social concern about the excessive use of online video games, none of the adolescents presented scores compatible with addiction. It seems, as it would be expected from the literature, to be male adolescents who play mostly online. Regarding the perceived social support, no gender differences were found, except for the Intimacy dimension, in which boys tend to score higher. This result, which cannot be sustained in the international literature, may be related in part to gender stereotypes (especially regarding intimacy) that may exist among some of the adolescents in the sample.

Keywords: *adolescents, social support, video games, internet*

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