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Postgraduate Certificate in Cyberpsychology

## Internet Gaming and Behavioral Addictions

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Internet Gaming and Behavioral Addictions:

Internet gaming and behavioral addictions refer to the compulsive and excessive use of online video games or other internet activities that lead to negative consequences in various areas of life. This phenomenon has become a significant concern in the field of cyberpsychology, as it can have serious implications for individuals' mental health, social relationships, and overall well-being.

Internet Gaming:

Internet gaming, also known as online gaming, refers to playing video games over the internet, either alone or with others. This form of gaming has become increasingly popular in recent years, with millions of players around the world participating in online multiplayer games such as Fortnite, League of Legends, and World of Warcraft.

Related Terms: Online Gaming, Multiplayer Gaming, Video Game Addiction

Behavioral Addictions:

Behavioral addictions are a type of addiction that does not involve the use of drugs or alcohol but rather revolves around a particular behavior or activity. Internet gaming falls under the category of behavioral addictions, along with other behaviors such as gambling, shopping, and social media use.

Related Terms: Process Addiction, Compulsive Behavior, Impulse Control Disorder

Addiction:

Addiction is a complex condition characterized by compulsive engagement in rewarding stimuli despite adverse consequences. In the context of internet gaming and behavioral addictions, individuals may experience a loss of control over their gaming habits, leading to negative effects on their physical, mental, and social well-being.

Examples: Someone who is addicted to internet gaming may spend countless hours playing games each day, neglecting other responsibilities such as work, school, or personal relationships.

Compulsive Behavior:

Compulsive behavior refers to repetitive actions or rituals that an individual feels driven to perform, often to relieve anxiety or to prevent perceived negative consequences. In the case of internet gaming and behavioral addictions, compulsive behaviors may manifest as an overwhelming urge to play video games, even when it interferes with daily life.

Examples: A person with a gaming addiction may feel compelled to play games for hours on end, sacrificing sleep, meals, and social interactions to satisfy their gaming cravings.

#### Impulse Control Disorder:

Impulse control disorder is a psychiatric condition characterized by the inability to resist impulses or urges that may be harmful to oneself or others. Individuals with internet gaming and behavioral addictions may struggle with impulse control, leading them to engage in excessive gaming despite the negative consequences it may entail.

Examples: Someone with an impulse control disorder related to internet gaming may find it challenging to stop playing games even when they know they should be doing something else, such as studying or working.

#### Virtual Environment:

A virtual environment is a computer-generated simulation of a three-dimensional space where users can interact with each other and with digital objects. In the context of internet gaming, players immerse themselves in virtual environments to play games, socialize with others, and engage in various activities.

Examples: Virtual environments in online games like Second Life or Minecraft allow players to build, explore, and interact with other users in a simulated world.

#### Escapism:

Escapism is the tendency to seek distraction and relief from the pressures of real life through engaging in activities that provide a temporary sense of detachment and fantasy. Internet gaming can serve as a form of escapism for individuals looking to escape from stress, boredom, or other negative emotions.

Examples: Someone who is feeling overwhelmed by work or personal problems may turn to internet gaming as a way to escape reality and immerse themselves in a virtual world where they can forget about their troubles.

#### Social Interaction:

Social interaction refers to the ways in which people communicate, connect, and engage with each other. In the context of internet gaming, players have the opportunity to interact with fellow gamers through chat functions, voice communication, and multiplayer gameplay, fostering social relationships and camaraderie.

Examples: Gamers who form online communities or guilds in games like World of Warcraft or Overwatch engage in social interactions by coordinating strategies, sharing tips, and participating in group activities together.

#### Cooperative Play:

Cooperative play, also known as co-op play, is a gameplay mode in which players work together to achieve a common goal or complete a task. Many internet games offer cooperative play options, allowing players to

collaborate, strategize, and communicate with each other to overcome challenges and progress in the game.

Examples: In cooperative games like Fortnite or Destiny 2, players team up with friends or strangers to battle enemies, solve puzzles, and complete missions together, emphasizing teamwork and coordination.

Competitive Play:

Competitive play is a gameplay mode in which players compete against each other in contests, competitions, or matches to determine a winner. Internet games often feature competitive play modes, such as player versus player (PvP) battles, tournaments, or ranked matches, where players test their skills and abilities against others.

Examples: Competitive games like League of Legends or Counter-Strike: Global Offensive pit players against each other in fast-paced, skill-based matches, where the goal is to outplay and outsmart opponents to claim victory.

MMORPG:

MMORPG stands for massively multiplayer online role-playing game, a genre of internet games that allows thousands of players to interact in a virtual world simultaneously. MMORPGs typically feature open worlds, quests, character customization, and player progression, offering a rich and immersive gaming experience.

Examples: Popular MMORPGs include World of Warcraft, Final Fantasy XIV, and The Elder Scrolls Online, where players can explore vast landscapes, undertake epic quests, and engage in cooperative or competitive gameplay with others.

Virtual Economy:

A virtual economy is an economic system that exists within a virtual environment, where players can buy, sell, trade, and exchange virtual goods and services using in-game currency or resources. Many internet games incorporate virtual economies, allowing players to acquire items, equipment, and assets through gameplay or transactions with other players.

Examples: Virtual economies in games like EVE Online or Runescape enable players to engage in virtual commerce, speculation, and entrepreneurship, where in-game resources and currency hold intrinsic value and significance.

Microtransactions:

Microtransactions are small, optional purchases made within a game to acquire virtual items, cosmetic enhancements, or gameplay advantages. Many internet games offer microtransaction systems as a way to monetize the game and provide players with additional content or customization options, often through the use of real-world money or in-game currency.

Examples: Players can buy new skins, emotes, or loot boxes in games like Fortnite or Overwatch through

microtransactions, allowing them to personalize their characters or enhance their gaming experience with unique items.

#### Loot Box:

A loot box is a virtual item that players can acquire in a game through gameplay, purchase, or microtransactions, containing randomized rewards such as items, cosmetics, or power-ups. Loot boxes have sparked controversy due to their gambling-like mechanics and potential for exploitation, leading to debates about their ethical implications and regulation.

Examples: Players can obtain loot boxes in games like Overwatch or FIFA Ultimate Team by completing challenges, leveling up, or purchasing them with real money, with the contents inside varying in rarity and value.

#### Skinner Box:

Skinner Box, named after the psychologist B.F. Skinner, is a term used to describe a system of operant conditioning in which rewards are dispensed at random intervals to reinforce desired behaviors. In the context of internet gaming, elements of skinner box design, such as loot boxes or progression systems, can be used to motivate and reward players for engaging with the game.

Examples: Games that employ skinner box mechanics, like Candy Crush or Clash of Clans, may offer players rewards, bonuses, or incentives to keep playing and progressing through the game's levels.

#### Grinding:

Grinding is a gameplay term that refers to repetitively performing tasks, activities, or actions in a game to accumulate resources, experience points, or in-game currency. Players may engage in grinding to level up their characters, unlock new content, or achieve specific goals within the game, often requiring time, effort, and persistence.

Examples: Players in role-playing games like World of Warcraft or Diablo III may grind monsters, quests, or dungeons to earn experience and loot, progressing their characters and enhancing their abilities over time.

#### Player Progression:

Player progression is the advancement and development of a player's character, skills, or abilities within a game through gameplay, achievements, or rewards. Many internet games feature progression systems that allow players to level up, unlock new content, and improve their in-game performance over time, providing a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction.

Examples: Advancing through levels, acquiring new gear, or mastering new abilities are common forms of player progression in games like Destiny 2 or Path of Exile, offering players a sense of growth and improvement as they play.

#### Leaderboards:

Leaderboards are in-game features that display rankings, scores, or achievements of players, allowing them to compare their performance and progress with others. Internet games often utilize leaderboards to promote competition, motivate players to excel, and foster a sense of community and camaraderie among participants.

Examples: Leaderboards in games like Fortnite or Rocket League showcase the top players in various categories, such as wins, kills, or points, inspiring players to climb the ranks and compete for recognition and prestige.

Social Comparison:

Social comparison is a psychological process in which individuals evaluate their own abilities, traits, or behaviors by comparing themselves to others. In the context of internet gaming, social comparison can influence players' self-esteem, motivation, and satisfaction, as they measure their performance and progress against that of their peers.

Examples: Players may engage in social comparison by looking at their friends' achievements, rankings, or gear in games like Hearthstone or Call of Duty, leading to feelings of competitiveness, envy, or validation based on how they stack up against others.

Self-Determination Theory:

Self-determination theory is a psychological framework that examines the factors that motivate individuals to pursue goals, engage in activities, and experience fulfillment and well-being. In the context of internet gaming, self-determination theory can help explain players' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, autonomy, competence, and relatedness in their gaming experiences.

Examples: Players who feel a sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in games like Minecraft or The Sims may be more likely to enjoy the gameplay, set meaningful goals, and experience a sense of satisfaction and enjoyment from their gaming activities.

Flow State:

Flow state, also known as being "in the zone," is a psychological concept that describes a state of complete immersion, focus, and enjoyment in an activity, where individuals experience a sense of effortless concentration and deep engagement. Internet gaming can induce flow states in players, as they become absorbed in the gameplay, lose track of time, and feel a sense of challenge and skill balance.

Examples: Gamers who achieve flow states while playing fast-paced, skill-based games like Tetris or Super Mario may feel a heightened sense of concentration, enjoyment, and satisfaction as they navigate challenges and overcome obstacles in the game.

Escalation of Commitment:

Escalation of commitment is a cognitive bias in decision-making where individuals continue to invest time, effort, or resources into a failing course of action, despite evidence of negative outcomes. In the context of

internet gaming, escalation of commitment can lead players to persist in playing games excessively, even when it results in adverse effects on their well-being and life circumstances.

Examples: A player experiencing escalation of commitment in an online game may keep playing for hours on end, hoping to achieve a desired outcome or recover losses, despite mounting frustration, exhaustion, or neglect of other responsibilities.

Tilt:

Tilt is a term used in gaming to describe a state of frustration, anger, or emotional distress that impairs a player's performance and decision-making abilities. Players may go on tilt after experiencing setbacks, losses, or unfair circumstances in a game, leading to impaired judgment, impulsive actions, and decreased gameplay quality.

Examples: A player who goes on tilt in a competitive match may become reckless, aggressive, or demoralized, making poor decisions and mistakes that can cost them the game or lead to further frustration and tilt.

Disinhibition:

Disinhibition is a psychological phenomenon in which individuals exhibit behaviors or emotions that are typically restrained, inhibited, or suppressed in normal circumstances. In the context of internet gaming, disinhibition can manifest as a loss of social norms, self-control, or inhibitions, leading players to engage in aggressive, impulsive, or inappropriate behaviors online.

Examples: Players who experience disinhibition in multiplayer games may engage in trash-talking, trolling, or grieving behavior towards others, feeling emboldened to act in ways they might not in face-to-face interactions due to the perceived anonymity and distance of the online environment.

Online Disinhibition Effect:

The online disinhibition effect is a term used to describe the phenomenon in which individuals behave differently online than they would in person, often displaying more extreme, uninhibited, or aggressive behaviors due to factors such as anonymity, invisibility, and dissociation from real-world consequences. In the context of internet gaming, the online disinhibition effect can lead to toxic, hostile, or confrontational interactions between players, impacting the overall gaming experience and community dynamics.

Examples: Players who engage in cyberbullying, harassment, or hate speech in online games like League of Legends or Overwatch may do so under the influence of the online disinhibition effect, feeling empowered to act out without fear of reprisal or accountability in the virtual space.

Avatar:

An avatar is a digital representation of a player within a game, often customizable in appearance, traits, and abilities to reflect the player's identity or preferences. Avatars serve as the player's in-game persona, embodying their presence, actions, and interactions in the virtual world of internet games.

Examples: Players can create and customize avatars in games like The Sims, Animal Crossing, or MMORPGs to design unique characters that represent them in the game world, allowing for personalization, self-expression, and immersion in the gameplay experience.

#### Identity Play:

Identity play refers to the act of exploring, adopting, or expressing different aspects of one's identity or personality through avatars, characters, or roles in games. In internet gaming, players may engage in identity play by creating and embodying diverse personas, personas, or narratives that reflect their desired self-image, fantasies, or aspirations.

Examples: Players who role-play as heroes, villains, or fantastical beings in games like Dungeons & Dragons, World of Warcraft, or Skyrim are engaging in identity play, assuming roles and identities that differ from their everyday selves to experience new perspectives, challenges, and adventures in the game world.

#### Presence:

Presence is a psychological state in which individuals feel as if they are physically, emotionally, or mentally present in a virtual environment, despite being aware of their physical surroundings. In the context of internet gaming, presence can enhance players' immersion, engagement, and realism in the game world, blurring the boundaries between reality and fantasy.

Examples: Players who experience a strong sense of presence in virtual reality (VR) games like Beat Saber or Half-Life: Alyx may feel as if they are truly inside the game world, interacting with objects, characters, and environments in a convincing and immersive manner that suspends disbelief and heightens their gaming experience.

#### Immersive Experience:

An immersive experience is one that fully engages and engrosses individuals in a sensory, emotional, or cognitive manner, creating a sense of presence, absorption, and involvement in an activity or environment. Internet gaming aims to provide immersive experiences for players through realistic graphics, interactive gameplay, dynamic storytelling, and social interactions, fostering deep engagement and enjoyment in the gaming process.

Examples: Players who lose track of time, forget their surroundings, and become deeply engrossed in games like The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild or Red Dead Redemption 2 are undergoing immersive experiences, where they feel connected, invested, and captivated by the game world and narrative unfolding before them.

#### Emotional Attachment:

Emotional attachment refers to the bond, connection, or affection that individuals form with characters, stories, or experiences in games, leading to feelings of empathy, investment, or attachment to the gaming content. Internet games often evoke emotional responses in players through compelling narratives, relatable characters, and impactful gameplay moments, fostering a sense of connection and emotional

engagement with the virtual world.

Examples: Players who develop emotional attachments to characters like Ellie from *The Last of Us*, Geralt of Rivia from *The Witcher*, or Sora from *Kingdom Hearts* may feel deeply invested, sympathetic, or attached to these virtual personas, experiencing a range of emotions as they follow their journeys and adventures throughout the game.

**Parasocial Interaction:**

Parasocial interaction is a concept in psychology that describes the one-sided, pseudo-social relationships that individuals form with media personalities, celebrities, or fictional characters, feeling a sense of connection, intimacy, or identification with them despite the lack of real-life interaction or reciprocity. In internet gaming, parasocial interaction can occur between players and game characters, streamers, or influencers, as players develop feelings of closeness, admiration, or attachment to these virtual figures through their interactions and experiences in the game.

Examples: Players who watch live streams, Let's Plays, or content from popular gaming personalities like Ninja, Pokimane, or PewDiePie may develop parasocial relationships with these influencers, feeling connected, entertained, and engaged with their content and personalities as if they were friends or companions in the gaming community.

**Prosocial Behavior:**

Prosocial behavior refers to actions, behaviors, or attitudes that are intended to benefit others, promote social harmony, or contribute to the well-being of individuals or communities. In internet gaming, prosocial behavior can manifest as acts of kindness, cooperation, or support between players, fostering positive interactions, teamwork, and mutual aid in multiplayer games and online communities.

Examples: Players who offer help, guidance, or resources to newbies, teammates, or fellow gamers in games like *Minecraft*, *Overwatch*, or *League of Legends* are engaging in prosocial behavior, demonstrating empathy, generosity, and cooperation to create a positive and supportive gaming environment for all participants.

**Empathy:**

Empathy is the ability to understand, share, and feel the emotions, thoughts, and experiences of others, demonstrating compassion, kindness, and sensitivity towards their feelings and perspectives. In internet gaming, empathy can play a crucial role in fostering positive relationships, communication, and cooperation among players, as they seek to understand and connect with each other on an emotional level.

Examples: Players who show empathy towards teammates, opponents, or online friends in games like *Among Us*, *Apex Legends*, or *Fortnite* may demonstrate understanding, support, and respect for others' feelings, building trust, camaraderie, and goodwill within the gaming community.

**Self-Efficacy:**

Self-efficacy is a psychological concept that refers to an individual's belief in their ability to succeed, achieve goals, and overcome challenges through their own efforts and actions. In the context of internet gaming, self-e