Lack of Awareness and Understanding of Youth Gaming Disorder

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CHALLENGE(S)

Lack of awareness and understanding: Many youth workers, educators, parents, and even healthcare professionals lack awareness and understanding of youth gaming disorder, making it difficult to identify and address the issue effectively. Gaming disorder is mostly handled as a sub-topic in youth work and not under main focus. It is usually part of the work on general mental health and wellbeing.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND GENERAL RECOMMENDATION

Youth gaming disorder refers to the problematic and excessive engagement in gaming activities that leads to significant impairment in various aspects and areas of a young individual's life. The World Health Organization (WHO) has included gaming disorder in its International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as a mental health disorder. The European Union (EU) has also acknowledged the importance of addressing gaming disorder and has emphasized the need for preventive measures and support for affected individuals. Despite its impact, many youth workers, educators, parents, and even healthcare professionals lack awareness and understanding of this condition. Gaming disorder is often treated as a sub-topic within the broader context of youth work, rather than receiving dedicated focus. It is crucial to address this issue by providing background information and general recommendations.

STAKEHOLDERS ADDRESSED

Youth workers & Educators

- Parents, Families and Friends
- Caregivers & Healthcare professionals
- Policymakers and government bodies

BARRIERS

Limited knowledge and understanding of gaming disorder among stakeholders.

Gaming disorder being treated as a sub-topic in youth work rather than receiving dedicated focus.

Stigmatization and misconceptions surrounding gaming disorder.

Lack of training and resources for stakeholders to effectively address gaming disorder.

SHORT-TERM GOALS

1. Increase awareness and knowledge about youth gaming disorder among stakeholders.
2. Enhance understanding of the signs, symptoms, and impact of gaming disorder.
   Promote the integration of gaming disorder as a primary focus in youth work and mental health initiatives.

LONG-TERM GOALS

1. Establish comprehensive guidelines and protocols for addressing gaming disorder in youth work regularly.

2. Ensure that gaming disorder receives equal recognition and attention as other mental health issues.

3. Foster a supportive and informed environment that encourages early identification and intervention.

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS

✔ Develop and distribute informational materials and resources on youth gaming disorder.
✔ Conduct workshops, seminars, and training to enhance stakeholders' understanding of gaming disorder.
✔ Collaborate with educational institutions to include gaming disorder awareness in curricula.
✔ Organize awareness campaigns targeting parents, educators, and healthcare professionals.

LONG-TERM ACTIONS

✔ Advocate for policy changes to include gaming disorder in mental health strategies and youth work frameworks.
✔ Establish specialized training programs on gaming disorder for youth workers, educators, and healthcare professionals.
✔ Foster partnerships between mental health organizations, gaming industry stakeholders, and youth work organizations to promote awareness and support.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Austria: The Austrian Ministry of Health has implemented the "Safer Internet Centre Austria" initiative, which aims to promote safer and responsible internet use among young people. The program includes resources, educational campaigns, and workshops addressing gaming addiction and online risks, providing support for youth, parents, and professionals. Austria also established BuPP (Bundesstelle für die Positivprädikatisierung von digitalen Spielen) which is the "Federal office for the positive rating of digital games". BuPP provides information on recommended computer games and recommended games for consoles and mobile devices (smartphones, tablets) in order to provide parents and educators with guidance when making a selection. Background information and tips as well as service offers on the subject complete the range of services offered by BuPP (www.bupp.at). The primary goal of BuPP is to provide parents and other educators with guidance regarding computer and console games. This is done on the one hand by providing independent information on recommendable computer games, and on the other hand by offering a range of other information and services. The aim is to support parents in actively dealing with the leisure activities of "their" children on the computer or game console.

United Kingdom: The "Game Quitters" (www.gamequitters.com) founded by ex-excessive gamer, Cam Adair, provides resources, online support communities, and coaching services to help individuals overcome gaming addiction. It offers a range of features, including an online community for connecting with others, a self-help program called Respawn, coaching services, and a wealth of educational resources. Game Quitters aims to empower individuals to overcome gaming addiction, regain control of their lives, and develop healthier habits. It is recognized as a leading platform in the field, providing a safe and supportive environment for individuals seeking help and guidance in their journey to reduce or quit excessive gaming. It has also succeeded in building connections with officials and influence policymaking. As a platform that was born from personal experience and by an individual, this initiative presents a significant bottom-up strategy which can be replicated in other countries, based on the power of personal experiences.