



## CHALLENGE(S)

Gaming Disorder (GD) or internet gaming disorder (IGD) requires an understanding of stigma and social attitudes. Awareness should be at the centre in order to dispel misconceptions and encourage open discussions. Youth workers, educators, parents, and healthcare professionals can play a supportive role, promoting understanding and fostering non-judgmental environments. Together, they can contribute to timely interventions and support for those affected. It is crucial to promote accurate and timely support to effectively tackle Internet Gaming Disorder, especially in communities where seeking the help of mental health professionals may be viewed as a weakness and stigmatised individuals and families. As a result, stigmatisation may have a domino effect on how gaming disorders are treated, leading to issues including social isolation, delayed detection, limited legislative assistance, and sensationalisation.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND GENERAL RECOMMENDATION

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, digital devices and gaming usage have significantly increased in popularity among young people. This has prompted a range of theoretical discussions and empirical investigations into these mediums' positive and negative effects. After being included in the DSM-5 and ICD-11, gaming disorder is now considered a mental health disorder. Like many mental health issues, stigma and social attitudes are a concern (Borges et al., 2021). Stigmatisation and negative social attitudes towards gaming disorder have developed due to various factors, such as lack of awareness, media portrayals, public perception, ineffective peer support programs, and a lack of understanding by policymakers. Stigma arises when an individual is viewed unfavourably, which can lead to a loss of status, discrimination, and devaluation. However, gaming is generally considered a normative, culturally accepted, and valued activity that is unrestricted by law (Galanis et al., 2023). Despite this, it can cause harm to some vulnerable users.

## STAKEHOLDERS ADDRESSED

- Youth workers & Educators
- Parents, Families and Friends
- Mental Health professionals
- Policymakers and government bodies

## BARRIERS

- Limited knowledge and understanding of gaming disorders among stakeholders.
- Gaming disorder being treated as a sub-topic in youth work rather than receiving dedicated focus.
- Stigmatisation and misconceptions surrounding gaming disorder.
- Lack of training and resources for stakeholders to effectively address gaming disorder.

## SHORT-TERM GOALS

1. Improving acceptance of visiting mental health professionals can help de-stigmatize young people or their families suffering from gaming disorders in local societies.
2. Develop and implement educational programs challenging stereotypes and misconceptions surrounding gaming disorder and other mental health issues.
1. Establish peer support initiatives at educational institutions and neighbourhood associations to give people with gaming disorders a safe haven.

## LONG-TERM GOALS

3. Promote the integration of mental health education in school curricula in order to enhance students' comprehension of mental health concerns, including gaming illness.
1. Create and put into action media literacy initiatives to inform the public about appropriate and truthful representations of gaming addiction in the media.
1. Create a database to monitor the long-term results of people getting treatment for gaming addiction, which will aid in the improvement of intervention tactics.

## SHORT-TERM ACTIONS

2. Develop and distribute informational materials that provide guidance on how individuals can overcome the problem of stigmatisation.
  - ✓ Raise awareness about the severity of gaming disorder through data visualisation campaigns.
  - ✓ Conduct workshops, seminars, and training to enhance stakeholders' understanding of gaming disorder.
  - ✓ Collaborate with start-up gaming companies to educate them about the risks of gaming disorder and address stigmatisation concerns.
  - ✓ Organise awareness campaigns targeting parents, educators, and healthcare professionals.

## LONG-TERM ACTIONS

- ✓ Establish ongoing education programs for professionals to stay informed about evolving understanding of gaming disorders and related issues.
- ✓ Establish partnerships with research institutions to conduct longitudinal studies on the impact of gaming disorder and develop evidence-based interventions.
- ✓ Foster partnerships between mental health organisations, gaming industry stakeholders, and youth work organisations to promote awareness and support.

## GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

- ✓ [The Role of Public Figures in Destigmatizing Mental Health disorders](#) (Wake Forest University)

A number of public figures have used their massive platforms to openly discuss their own mental health challenges to educate the public. Some examples are:

- Demi Lovato (singer), bipolar disorder
- Michael Phelps (Olympic swimmer), depression
- Naomi Osaka (professional tennis player), anxiety and depression
- Lady Gaga (singer, actress), trauma-induced mental illness

Many famous personalities have been open about discussing their mental health issues. By doing so, they are helping to increase public awareness and understanding. These figures have a large fan following, which enables them to reach millions of people. Lady Gaga, for instance, has more than 84 million followers on Twitter alone. When celebrities use their notoriety, influence, and massive reach to educate and normalise discussing mental health issues, it plays a part in destigmatizing them. In addition, it may encourage others to seek support for their own mental health struggles. In an article for Healthline, Allison Forti, Ph.D., associate professor, and associate director of online counselling programs at Wake Forest University, said, "When a celebrity draws attention to their personal struggles with mental health, they spread awareness by providing an example of what mental health challenges psychologically, cognitively, and behaviourally look like."