

OVERCLOCK

Is gaming addiction a mental disorder?

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On May 25, 2019, the World Health Organisation (WHO) voted to classify video game addiction as a mental disorder. Now, video game addiction is actually a very serious problem for a small percentage of today's youth. But is it really a mental disorder on its own? Or is it just the effect of a deep-underlying problem?

The WHO mentions certain criteria which must be met in order for an individual to be diagnosed with this disease. These include impaired control over video game timing and intensity, prioritising gaming over all aspects of life, and constantly engaging in playing video games despite the onset of negative consequences.

Bear in mind, these behaviours are actually exhibited by many individuals. These are real symptoms. In countries like Taiwan, and South Korea, the gaming café culture is widely prevalent. Popularly called "PC Bangs" in South Korea, these are places where rows of computers are occupied by avid gamers battling it out online in their favourite multiplayer titles. However, it is not uncommon to hear news of people actually dying in these cafés. Addicted gamers would play for inhuman hours at such intensities, that they would refuse to get up for food or even bathroom breaks. Also, multiplayer gaming is a mentally-taxing endeavour. You always have to be on your toes and keep your brain engaged to stay ahead of your opponents. This, combined with the debilitating conditions that these people expose themselves to, causes death to some individuals. One gamer in Taiwan reportedly played for 3 days straight in a café before dying of cardiac arrest. The other people in the premises noticed his stiff body hours after he had passed. So, yes, gaming addiction can be a real problem for people.

That being said, is it actually right to classify this behaviour as a mental disorder? A lot of researchers believe that the WHO has acted based on insufficient evidence. The American Psychiatric Association has stated exactly that. So, why is this supposedly-dangerous mental disorder being challenged by so many experts in the field?

We have to look at the underlying cause as to why people are getting addicted to video games. People who play for hours on end, typically do so as a means to escape from certain aspects of their lives. Social anxiety is prevalent amongst the youth of today with rising pressure from peer groups, family members, and colleagues. When I was a kid, I would use video games to forget about my troubles at school. It was the only thing that gave me the

relief I needed to focus on my studies and my mental well-being.

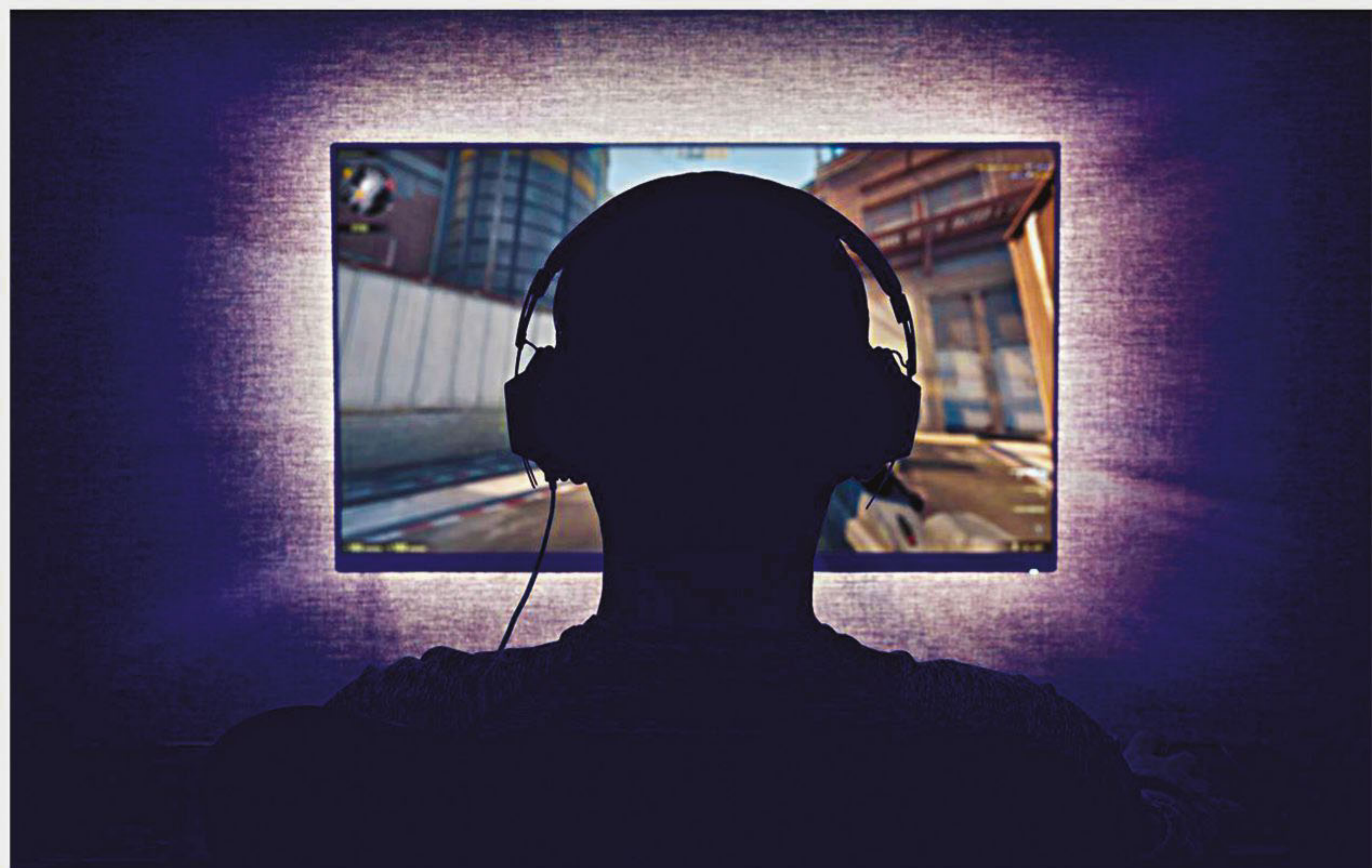
Depression is a huge cause for video game addiction as well. Parents in countries I mentioned earlier are notorious for exposing their kids to increasingly demanding standards and tight control. Combine this with our ever-increasing social anxiety from social media and peer interactions, and we have an environment which chips away at our mental health like nothing.

So, classifying video game addiction as a mental disorder

actually trivialises the core problems of kids spiralling into depression and suffering from social anxiety. It can lead to grave consequences where psychiatrists or even just parents will look to solve every problem in their kids' lives by taking away the only thing that will save them: video games. It should be obvious at this point that doing this will actually send kids spiralling down harder.

So, how to efficiently manage resources and map out long term plans by playing strategy games. I met some of the most amazing friends online while playing League of Legends. I learned more about English grammar from RPGs than my textbooks. Esports is also a viable career option in the West and in countries like South Korea, where the stigma surrounding gaming is less prevalent when compared to countries like Bangladesh.

Video games can get addictive for people. But the people who succumb to long gaming sessions usually suffer



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Gaming has more positives than negatives. I learned

from something much more serious. Moderation is necessary, yes, but it is also necessary to not deflect blame to the symptom of a problem, lest we trivialise the suffering of those with mental health issues.

Shahrukh Ikhtear roams the mystical plains of adulthood in search of the fabled work-life balance. Help him out with good music or just say wholesome things at fb.com/sr.ikhtear