



**Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:**

Mr. Nirav Saini, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Arts, +1 (587)-322-0702, [nirav.saini@ucalgary.ca](mailto:nirav.saini@ucalgary.ca)

**Supervisor:**

Dr. David C. Hodgins, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Arts, +1 (403) 220-3371, [dhodgins@ucalgary.ca](mailto:dhodgins@ucalgary.ca)

**Title of Project:**

Reaching Expert Consensus Towards an Assessment Tool to Identify the Addictive Potential of Video Games Based on Structural Features: An International Delphi Study

**Sponsor:**

N/A

---

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

Participation is completely voluntary. Your responses will be anonymous to other participants, although participants will be aware of your participation in the study. Responses will only be visible to the research team to assess whether participants have completed the survey.

**Purpose of the Study**

Gaming disorder, also known as video game addiction, is an emerging psychological condition that has been recently recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO). Someone with a gaming disorder may have trouble controlling/limiting their gaming behaviour, to the extent that it affects hobbies, social life, family life, and mental well-being. Published research has identified that certain design elements (structurally features) inherent to video games can contribute to the onset of gaming disorder.

The purpose of the study is to create a scale to estimate the predictive potential of video games based on the structural characteristics they contain. A tool of this kind could have substantial benefits for people who buy and play video games by informing them ahead of time about which video games are problematic. In this way, this research could enhance awareness of gaming disorder on a societal level and encourage consumers to take preventative measures, with the hopes of reducing the number of people suffering from gaming disorder. This research can also be crucial for providing a framework to fully comprehend the factors that contribute to gaming disorder and advance the scientific community's shared understanding of this mental illness.

The current study will be guided by two questions: 'What design features / structural characteristics of video games predict the potential of addiction?' and 'How much does each design feature / structural characteristic of a video game contribute to the risk of addiction?'

### **What Will I Be Asked To Do**

You have been invited as someone who can provide an informed opinion on which features within video games (structural features) can make them addictive. You will be asked through a series of surveys about how important different gaming features are to the development of gaming disorder. The responses that are provided by you and the other panel experts will be used to construct an assessment tool (a scale) that can predict how addictive a video game is based on its design alone.

This study will be done using the Delphi method. This is a technique that relies on a group of experts to reach an agreement on a series of questions. In the case of this study, you will be provided with three or more rounds of a survey that ask for your opinion on the relative contribution of different design features within a game to gaming addiction. It is expected that there will be three rounds of the surveys to reach sufficient agreement among the overall group, however, further rounds may be necessary if an adequate level of agreement is not achieved.

In the first round of this study, you will be asked to rate the addictive potential of various structural characteristics inherent within the video game design. You will be asked questions such as "rate the relative importance of multiplayer games to the contribution of gaming addiction." If you are uncertain of a design feature, there will be an option for "I don't know." You will also be asked to provide input on the structural features presented to you through an open response form, where you may suggest additions, exclusions, and/or summarizations of the presented items.

Each of the rounds that follow will begin when the lead researcher provides you with the aggregated responses from the previous round. You will be asked to reflect on the responses based on the consensus of the group compared to your previous rating. You will then be asked to provide an updated response to each of the questions. The questions on the survey may change depending on the input given in the previous round. After the conclusion of the third round, if there is a unanimous expert agreement, this study will come to an end.

The first survey round will take roughly thirty minutes, though times may vary depending on the participant. Therefore, the total participation time will last for the duration it takes you to complete the survey responses. The second, third, and any following rounds are expected to take a shorter amount of time due to familiarity with the

task. It is anticipated that three rounds of the survey will be administered throughout the duration of roughly one month, and the total participation time in this study should take approximately two hours. If further rounds are necessary, participants will be informed through email from the Panel Facilitator and asked for consent to conduct further rounds. Participation in follow-up rounds is entirely voluntary.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you may refuse to participate altogether, refuse to participate in parts of the study, decline to answer any and all questions, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

### **What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?**

This study is quasi-anonymous, which means that while your responses shall remain anonymous, your participation will not. Your responses cannot be traced back to you by anyone but the Panel Facilitator.

You will be asked to provide your full name, year of birth, gender, and the name of any organizations you are affiliated with. Should you agree to participate, you will be asked whether you are a researcher ( $\geq 2$  research publications relevant to gaming disorder published in a scientific journal), a clinical expert ( $\geq 6$  months of experience with treating gaming disorder or having or treated  $\geq 3$  cases of gaming disorder), or someone with lived experience (no formal diagnosis required). If you are a clinical expert, you will be asked about how long you have been treating gaming addiction or how many patients you have worked with on gaming disorder. If you identify as a participant with lived experience, you will be asked about how long you have experienced problems with video game addiction and which symptoms you have experienced in the past.

These will be the only identifiers obtained. If you wish to be acknowledged for your contribution to this study you will be provided with an option to give your name.

### **Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?**

There are minimal risks involved with participation. If you are someone with past experience of gaming disorder, then involvement in this research may elicit reminders of unpleasant past experiences. However, questions in the surveys are not designed to be sensitive in nature and/or evoke negative emotions about the participants' personal histories.

Please note that your choice to consent to this study is entirely voluntary, and if you feel discomfort at any stage of this research you can choose to opt-out of answering any and/or all survey items with no repercussions. You will not incur any costs for choosing to participate in this study. You will not receive any form of compensation for your contribution to this study.

On an individual level, there are no direct benefits to experts who choose to consent to participation in this study. On a broader scale, contribution to this study will advance understanding of the mechanisms that contribute to gaming disorder. More substantially, the results of the proposed assessment tool can allow for mitigation strategies to minimize the risk associated with video games. Furthermore, this research can elucidate a model to push for ethical game design.

## What Happens to the Information I Provide?

Only the research team will have access to the data provided in the survey responses. No one except the research team will be allowed to see any of the answers to the survey questions. You will be asked to provide your name at the start of each survey, but this will be exclusively to allow the panel facilitator to know if you have completed each survey round. Any identifying information will be separated from your responses prior to any form of analysis. Only group information will be summarized for any presentation or publication of results. The questionnaires will be conducted online and kept under a secure username and password that is only accessible by the research team. The anonymous data will be stored indefinitely for further analysis on a password-secured university hard drive.

You are free to withdraw until one week (7 days) after data collection of each survey round (i.e. before your identifying information is separated from your responses). After this period, withdrawal of your responses in the corresponding survey round will no longer be possible. Any information that you provide prior to withdrawal will be retained for analysis, but you may request to have your data removed by informing the research team.

---

## *Assumed Consent*

If you click on the next button below, this indicates that:

- you have read the above information
- you have agreed to participate in this study
- you have agreed to be contacted about a follow-up survey round, with the understanding that you can always decline the request
- you are either a:
  - researcher with 2 or more research publications relevant to gaming disorder published in a scientific journal
  - clinical expert with either
    - $\geq 12$  months of experience with treating gaming disorder
    - having or treated  $\geq 3$  cases of gaming disorder)
  - someone with lived experience (no formal diagnosis required).

## Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

Mr. Nirav Saini  
Department of Psychology/Faculty of Arts  
+1 (587)-322-0702, [nirav.saini@ucalgary.ca](mailto:nirav.saini@ucalgary.ca)

Dr. David C. Hodgins  
Department of Psychology/Faculty of Arts

+1 (403) 220-3371, [dhodgins@ucalgary.ca](mailto:dhodgins@ucalgary.ca)

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Analyst, Research Services Office, the University of Calgary at 403.220.6289 or 403.220.8640; email [cfreb@ucalgary.ca](mailto:cfreb@ucalgary.ca). A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.