

Research finds more support is needed for gamers who play video games with loot boxes

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A Bournemouth University (BU) research project exploring university students' experiences of loot boxes in video games has found that more support and regulations are needed to prevent risks and behavior such as negative feelings, overspending and impulse buying.

Loot boxes feature in video games and are often displayed as chests, crates or card packs which contain surprise items inside (varying in game value) to be used during the game. For example, coins, power ups, characters, and weapons.

The research suggests that [players](#) feel there are risks associated with loot boxes and more could be done to support players because there is not enough transparency about the likelihood of winning prizes and what their money will actually buy them.

But because players are unaware of the odds of winning it could encourage them to spend more on loot boxes to increase their chances.

Behaviors associated with loot boxes were suggested to be similar to those of gambling; however, there are more regulations and support in place to ensure players are aware of the risks of gambling.

The BU research paper assessed six key themes to explore experiences of loot boxes:

- Random Chance Effects
- Attitudes Towards Content
- Implementation
- Parallels with Gambling
- Game Design
- The Player

Senior Lecturer, Dr. Sarah Hodge said, "How loot boxes are designed and experienced by players impacted how they felt about playing the games and their behavior, such as [negative feelings](#), parallels with gambling, impulse buying, overspending and the pressure to spend money. It is important that there is more support for people who play games with loot boxes to ensure they are fully informed about the in-

game purchases they are making.

"Young adults and university students can be particularly vulnerable as they are just getting to grips with budgeting and spending their money independently; therefore, understanding the value of money and managing these in game purchases could be challenging for them."

The research was conducted with 21 [university students](#) who regularly played video games. The students were interviewed and asked about their experiences and perceptions of loot boxes in relation to the six themes to understand how [loot boxes](#) made them feel and their thoughts about this game feature.

More information: Sarah E. Hodge et al, What's in the box? Exploring UK players' experiences of loot boxes in games; the conceptualisation and parallels with gambling, *PLOS ONE* (2022). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0263567](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0263567)

For more support about gaming and gambling, contact the Young Gamers and Gamblers Education Trust (YGAM): <https://www.ygam.org/>

Provided by Bournemouth University

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