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# Understanding Motivational Factors of Problematic Video Gaming in the USMC and US Navy



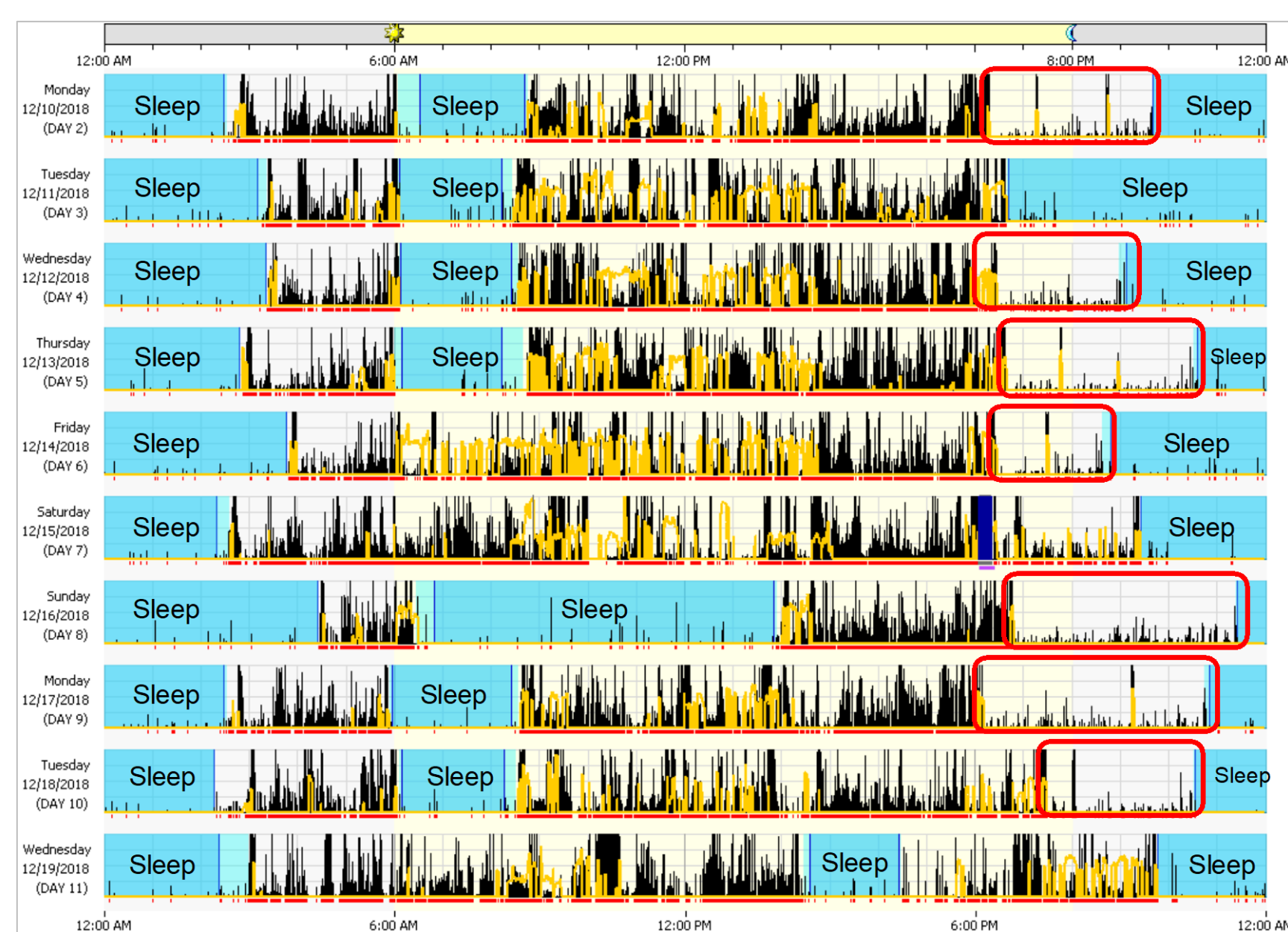
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## Background

- A significant percentage of active-duty service members (ADSMs) is involved in video gaming.
- Excessive video gaming can become problematic because it has the potential to affect well-being and behavior. For example, excessive video gaming is associated with high stress levels, lower psychosocial well-being and psychological functioning, loneliness and depression, and delinquency and aggressive behavior.
- Video gaming may also interfere with sleep, especially when gamers stay up late playing video games instead of sleeping.



Sailors participate in a 2016 video game tournament in the forward mess decks of the Dwight D. Eisenhower while underway. Photo from [www.navytimes.com](http://www.navytimes.com)



Actigram of a Sailor who reported playing video games before sleep

## Study Objectives

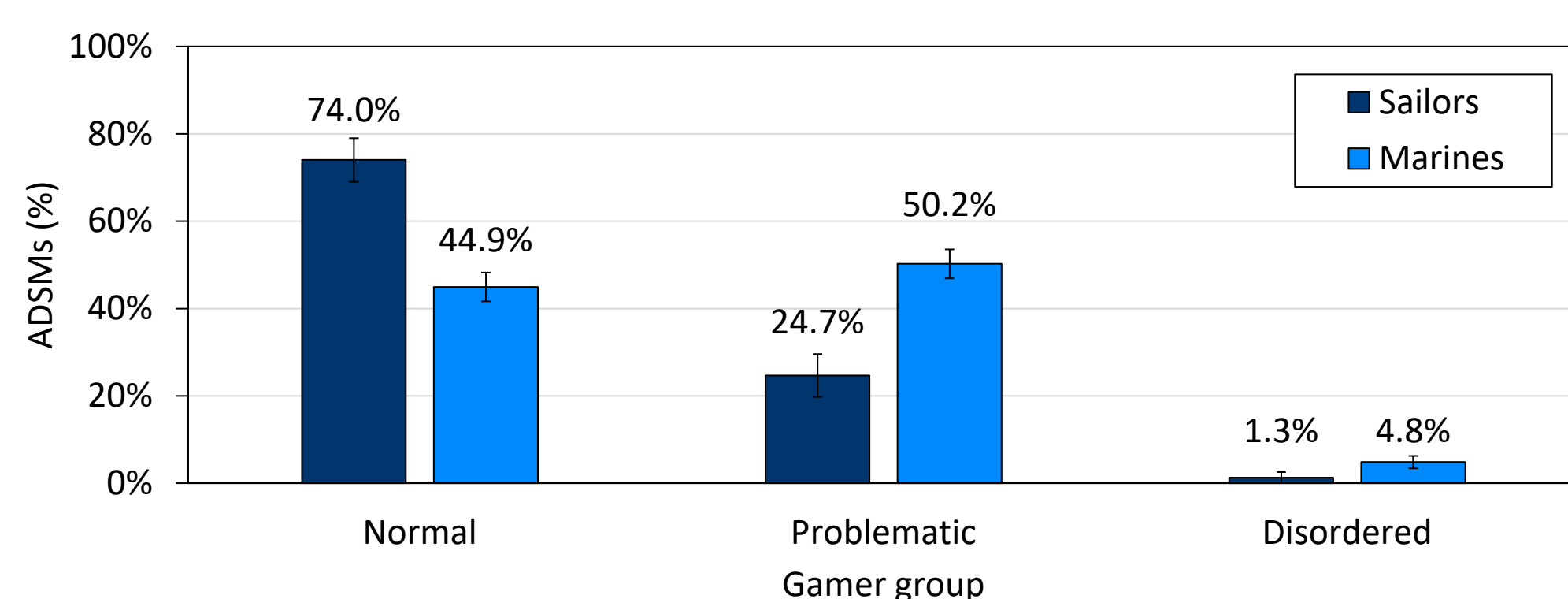
- Assess the prevalence of video gaming.
- Explore why Marines and Sailors engage in video gaming.
- Explore whether ADSMs use gaming as a maladaptive coping mechanism.
- Identify the key factors associated with video gaming.
- Assess the effect of video gaming on ADSMs' behavior, quality of life, and everyday functioning.

## Methods

- Surveyed 1013 ADSMs on 3 USN ships and 3 USMC commands.
- Conducted focus groups (43 Marines) to assess ADSMs' opinions on video gaming.

## Conclusions

- Video gaming is highly prevalent in the USN and USMC.
- Self-identified gamers are predominantly young enlisted males.
- Gamers play video games mostly at home/off duty, but also when on duty or when deployed/underway.
- Video gaming starts early in life for many ADSMs.
- Gamers use smartphones, game consoles, and computers.
- Gamers tend to play video games later in the day while some stay up later due to video gaming.
- Most USN gamers report video gaming in their racks or the mess decks/common areas when deployed/underway.
- The most frequently cited motivational factor for video gaming is recreation, followed by coping with stress.
- ~32% of gamers reported dissatisfaction with their life.
- Nearly a quarter of gamers report symptoms of depression (~23%), generalized anxiety disorder (~19.0%), excessive daytime sleepiness (~33%), with AUDIT-C scores suggestive of heavy drinking (39%).



## Recommendations

1. ADSMs should be educated about gaming's negative effects:
  - Video games can be “time waster” and sleep “thief”
  - Reduced and degraded social interactions
  - Risk of addiction
2. Develop problematic VG awareness training for leadership and ADSMs.
3. Continue refining criteria for “problematic” and “disordered” video gaming that are appropriate and tailored for the military.
4. Assess whether and how video gaming behaviors change after joining the military.
5. Repeat the survey in a larger sample to validate the current findings.
6. Conduct a sleep study using objective methods to reliably assess sleep/wake patterns and sleep attributes of gamers (e.g., sleep duration, timing, quality).
7. Conduct a follow-on study to more reliably assess the prevalence of video gaming in the USN and the USMC.
  - Include a few questions related to video gaming in a more general survey that is not focused solely on video gaming (e.g., DEOMI, command climate survey).
8. Assess the effect of other “time wasters”, e.g., internet use, social media.

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