



Loot Boxes and Gambling-Related Harm: The Role of Psychological Vulnerabilities — A Systematic Review (2021–2026)

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Introduction	Method
Loot boxes provide randomized in-game rewards and share gambling-like features. Previous reviews consistently associate loot box engagement with problem gambling, but methodological limitations remain. Aim: To update 2021–2026 evidence on problem gambling severity and psychological correlates.	Databases PubMed/Medline Web of Science ProQuest Search period From January 2021 to March 2026 Quality assessment CRF-QS PRISMA Flow diagram available via QR

Results

18 studies

33,288 participants

16 cross-sectional

2 longitudinal

LOOT BOX ENGAGEMENT

↔

PROBLEM GAMBLING SEVERITY

r = .17–.48 | OR up to 6.00

**Gaming Disorder**Most frequently investigated

**Emotional functioning**Depression · anxiety · stress · distress

**Gambling-related cognitions**

**Motivation / impulsivity**

Conclusions and clinical implications

1. Consistent association with problem gambling severity.

2. Association occurs within a broader pattern of psychological vulnerability.

3. Causality and a single pathway are not established.



Loot box participation ≠ Gambling Disorder



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