New study suggests tabletop games reduce stress and anxiety

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In this first-of-its-kind research project, Harrisburg University of Science and Technology partnered with The Bodhana Group to run an exploratory study on whether intentionally introduced cognitive

behavioral therapy, delivered through the medium of Tabletop Role Playing Game (TTRPG) groups, could positively affect social skills, reduce anxiety symptoms and behaviors, and enhance the mental well-being of participants.

On average, the data collected from five different TTRPG groups over the course of 10 months suggests that TTRPGs, both as a casual form of entertainment and modified for cognitive behavioral therapy can reduce general anxiety, reduce social anxiety, and improve social skills.

The study, "Exploring the efficacy of cognitive behavioral therapy and role-playing games as an intervention for adults with social anxiety," appears in the journal *Social Work with Groups*. The co-authors are Matthew Varrette and Jack Berkenstock of the Bodhana Group, and Adams Greenwood-Ericksen, Anthony Ortega, Faith Michaels, Veronica Pietrobon & Marc Schodorf of Harrisburg University.

Research has been done on the therapeutic benefits of tabletop role-playing games for social skills and mental well-being, however, the available data is qualitative and anecdotal without supporting quantitative data or mental health screening.

Since this was an exploratory study, the focus was on a small number of participants (25) between five different RPG groups (three therapeutic and two non-therapeutic) meeting once a week for 12 weeks. More research is required, and The Bodhana Group hopes to continue this research with additional participants over a similar or longer period. Additionally, the hope is that this research encourages other institutions to follow similarly robust (or improved) research methodologies to add to the pool of qualitative and quantitative data.

   More information: Matthew Varrette et al, Exploring the efficacy of cognitive behavioral therapy and role-playing games as an intervention

Provided by Harrisburg University of Science and Technology