

**Title:** Gambling in Disguise: How Minors Are Exposed to Gamble Through Virtual Loot Boxes  
Within Popular Video Games

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Loot boxes in online video games are problematic because they share several parallels with traditional gambling mechanics. According to Aaron Drummond and James D. Sauer of Massey University, the “mechanisms underlying player’ engagement with loot boxes are similar, if not identical, to gambling . . . [by] shar[ing] important structural and psychological similarities” (Drummond & Suer). Loot boxes incorporate a conglomeration of digital sensory feedback and addictive elements to lure engagement with the players, garnering an absurd amount of revenue. Video game developers are normalizing the process of gambling by abusing the addictive nature of loot boxes through intrusive solicitations, easy payment access, and pay-to-win mechanics that facilitate an alarming amount of adolescent gambling addiction cases in the last few years alone. The exposure of gambling has detrimental cognitive effects on the adolescent mind that risk the development of other harmful addictions, depression, substance abuse, suicidal tendencies, and higher rates of anxiety in present or later stages of life. Criticism over loot boxes have spawned controversy and legislative response around the world. Countries such as Belgium have adopted legislation backed up with strict monetary and criminal consequences to outlaw loot boxes. In doing so, Belgium’s solution to ban loot boxes guides a global movement to curtail adolescent gambling addictions and remove loot box mechanics entirely from video games. The society must rise against the tactics used by gaming studios to normalize gambling and support stricter regulations on underage gambling in video games or risk an increase in adolescent gambling addictions.

## References

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