Table-Top Role-Playing Games (TTRPG) mediated psychological interventions:
A scoping review protocol

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EXCESSIVE GAMBLING: PROMOTING AND PROTECTING HEALTH IN A DIGITALISED WORLD
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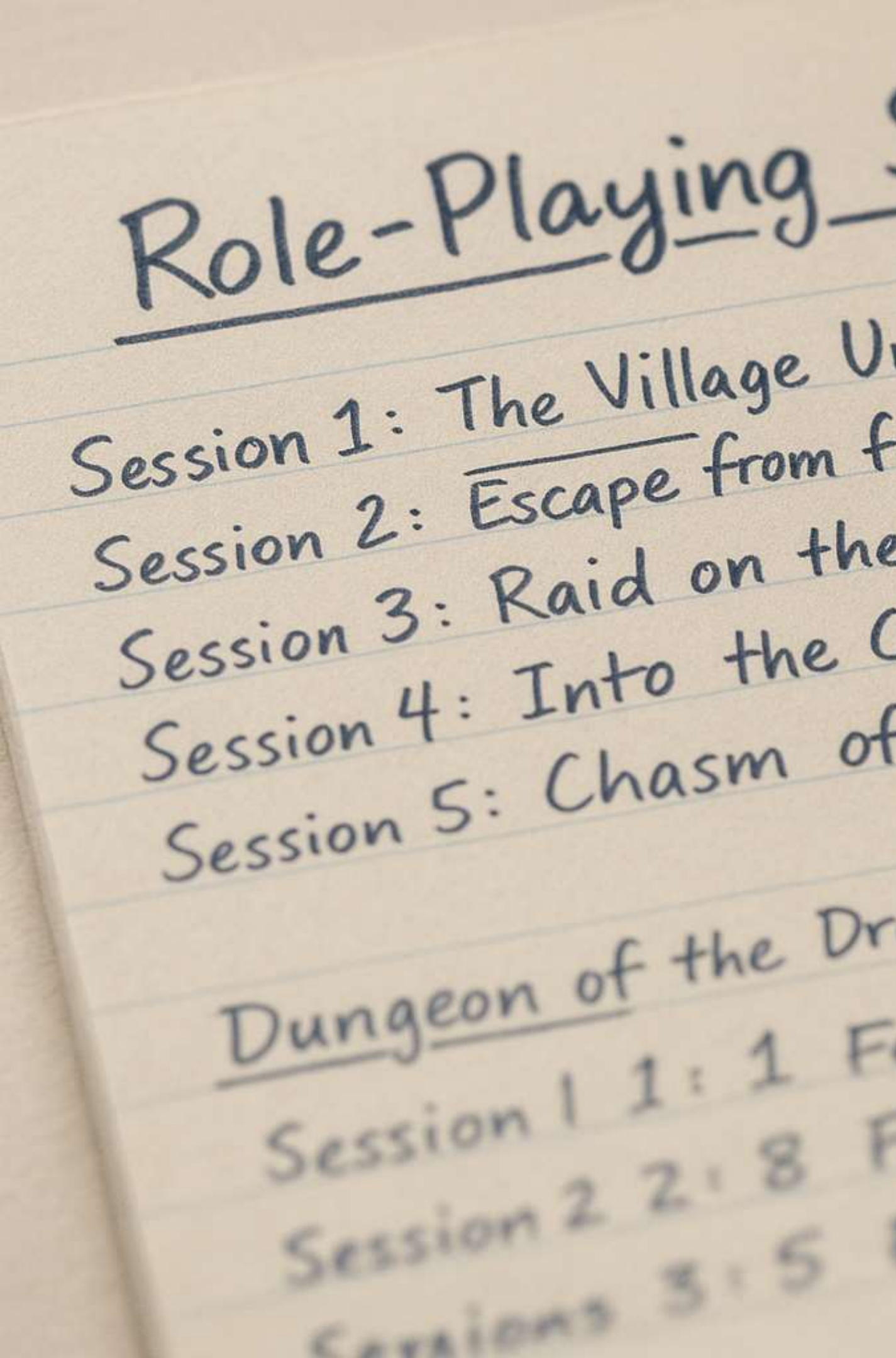
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Agenda

Support, Ethics, and Disclosures

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- Ethics Approval: Not required – no data involving human participants was collected

- Conflict of Interest: I have no financial interests or relationships to disclose regarding the subject matter of this presentation.

Objective of the Presentation

- Present the methodological framework of the scoping review

- Describe the search strategy, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and data analysis plan

- Discuss key methodological challenges in studying TTRPG-based interventions

- Offer recommendations for standardizing research protocols in this field

Introduction

- TTRPGs (e.g., Dungeons & Dragons) are structured narrative games involving collaborative storytelling

- Initially recreational, now explored in clinical settings for therapeutic purposes

- Potential benefits: emotional regulation, social skills, self-esteem, cognitive flexibility

- Growing interest but lack of synthesized evidence specific to TTRPG-mediated interventions

- Scoping review chosen due to diversity of methodologies and evolving terminology

Objectives of the Scoping Review

- Map the landscape of TTRPG-mediated psychological interventions

- Identify psychological outcomes, target populations, and intervention settings

- Describe the structure and facilitation of interventions

- Analyze research methodologies used in the field

- Highlight gaps and propose directions for future research

Review Questions

- **Primary Question**
  - What are the reported psychological impacts of professionally facilitated TTRPG-mediated interventions in clinical or therapeutic settings?

- **Secondary Questions**
  - What populations are involved (e.g., age, clinical status, gender, nationality)?
  - What are the characteristics of the interventions (structure, format, setting)?
 - What methodologies are used to study these interventions?

Method – Eligibility Criteria

- **Inclusion Criteria**
  - Peer-reviewed studies (English or French, 1974–2025)
  - Structured TTRPG interventions led by trained professionals (therapists, counsellors, paraprofessionals)
  - Clinical or therapeutic setting (online or in-person, group or individual)
  - Report on psychological or psychosocial outcomes

- **Exclusion Criteria**
  - Recreational, unstructured, or educational TTRPGs
  - LARP, video games, board games, or gambling contexts
  - Gray literature and unpublished studies
  - Interventions without therapeutic intent or facilitation
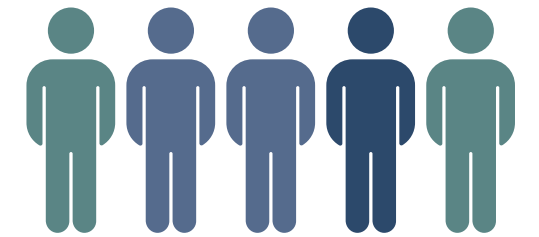
Method – Information Sources and Search Strategy

- Databases: PubMed, PsycINFO, WoS, Embase, ScienceDirect

- Search range: 1974–2025

- Languages: English and French

- Strategy developed using PRESS checklist

- Algorithm: terms cover TTRPG mechanics and therapeutic contexts

- Preliminary search validated with benchmark articles

**TABLE 9: PRESS 2015 EVIDENCE-BASED CHECKLIST**

Translation of the research question	• Does the search strategy match the research question/PICO? • Are the search concepts clear? • Are there too many or too few PICO elements included? • Are the search concepts too narrow or too broad? • Does the search retrieve too many or too few records? (Please show number of hits per line.) • Are unconventional or complex strategies explained?
Boolean and proximity operators (these vary based on search service)	• Are Boolean or proximity operators used correctly? • Is the use of nesting with brackets appropriate and effective for the search? • If NOT is used, is this likely to result in any unintended exclusions? • Could precision be improved by using proximity operators (e.g., adjacent, near, within) or phrase-searching instead of AND? • Is the width of proximity operators suitable (e.g., might adj5 pick up more variants than adj2)?
Subject headings (database-specific)	• Are the subject headings relevant? • Are any relevant subject headings missing; e.g., previous index terms? • Are any subject headings too broad or too narrow? • Are subject headings exploded where necessary and vice versa? • Are major headings ("starring" or restrict to focus) used? If so, is there adequate justification? • Are subheadings missing? • Are subheadings attached to subject headings? (Floating subheadings may be preferred.) • Are floating subheadings relevant and used appropriately? • Are both subject headings and terms in free text (see below) used for each concept?

Method – Study Selection Process

- Follows PRISMA flow diagram

- Three-phase screening:
  - Title & abstract screening
  - Full-text review
  - Final inclusion

- Two independent reviewers, third reviewer resolves disagreements

- Pre-test with 10 articles to refine criteria

- Conservative approach: uncertain cases proceed to full-text
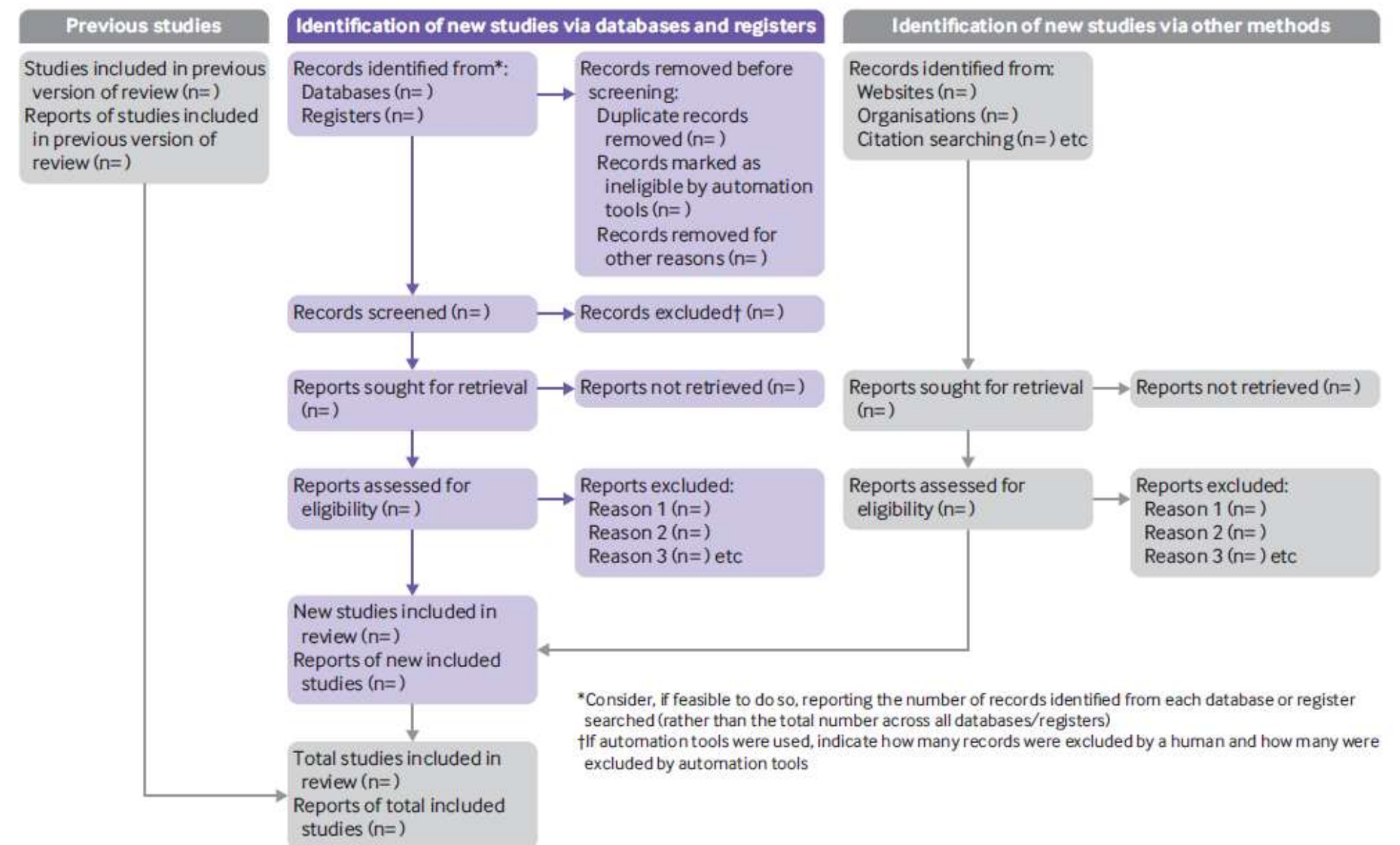
Method – Data Extraction

- Custom extraction tool developed by review team

- Pilot-tested and refined for consistency

- Categories:
  - Study and population characteristics *> Secondary question - target populations*
  - Intervention structure and delivery *> Secondary question - intervention's characteristics*
  - Psychological outcomes *> Primary question*
  - Methodological details *> Secondary question - methodologies*

- Dual extraction with cross-checking

- Missing data addressed via author contact (2 attempts)

Method – Quality Assessment

- Tool: Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT, 2018)

- Applied independently by two reviewers

- Study design identified before appraisal

- Interrater agreement measured (Cohen's kappa)

- Disagreements resolved by discussion or third reviewer

- Quality not used as inclusion criterion

Part I: Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT), version 2018

Category of study designs	Methodological quality criteria
Screening questions (for all types)	S1. Are there clear research questions?
	S2. Do the collected data allow to address the research questions?
	Further appraisal may not be feasible or appropriate when the answer is 'No' or 'Can't tell' to one or both screening
1. Qualitative	1.1. Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?
	1.2. Are the qualitative data collection methods adequate to address the research question?
	1.3. Are the findings adequately derived from the data?
	1.4. Is the interpretation of results sufficiently substantiated by data?
	1.5. Is there coherence between qualitative data sources, collection, analysis and interpretation?
2. Quantitative randomized controlled trials	2.1. Is randomization appropriately performed?
	2.2. Are the groups comparable at baseline?
	2.3. Are there complete outcome data?
	2.4. Are outcome assessors blinded to the intervention provided?
	2.5 Did the participants adhere to the assigned intervention?
3. Quantitative non-randomized	3.1. Are the participants representative of the target population?
	3.2. Are measurements appropriate regarding both the outcome and intervention (or exposure)?
	3.3. Are there complete outcome data?
	3.4. Are the confounders accounted for in the design and analysis?
	3.5. During the study period, is the intervention administered (or exposure occurred) as intended?
4. Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?
	4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?
	4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?
	4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?
	4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?
5. Mixed methods	5.1. Is there an adequate rationale for using a mixed methods design to address the research question?
	5.2. Are the different components of the study effectively integrated to answer the research question?
	5.3. Are the outputs of the integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpreted?
	5.4. Are divergences and inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative results adequately addressed?
	5.5. Do the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods involved?

# Method – Synthesis and Presentation of Results

- Descriptive synthesis of included studies

- Quantitative: frequency counts (populations, settings, outcomes)

- Qualitative: summary of intervention structures and psychological impacts

- Tables and figures to illustrate findings

- MMAT results highlight methodological strengths and weaknesses

- Flexible reporting structure to adapt to evolving findings

Conclusion and Recommendations

- TTRPGs seems to show therapeutic promise, but the literature remains methodologically fragmented

- This scoping review aims to clarify intervention types, outcomes, and populations

- Key recommendations for future scoping reviews:
  - Clarify core concepts early to avoid overlap with adjacent domains
  - Anticipate terminological variability and design the search accordingly
  - Balance inclusive criteria with clear justification for what counts as intervention
  - Plan for how to extract and compare complex, non-standardized intervention features
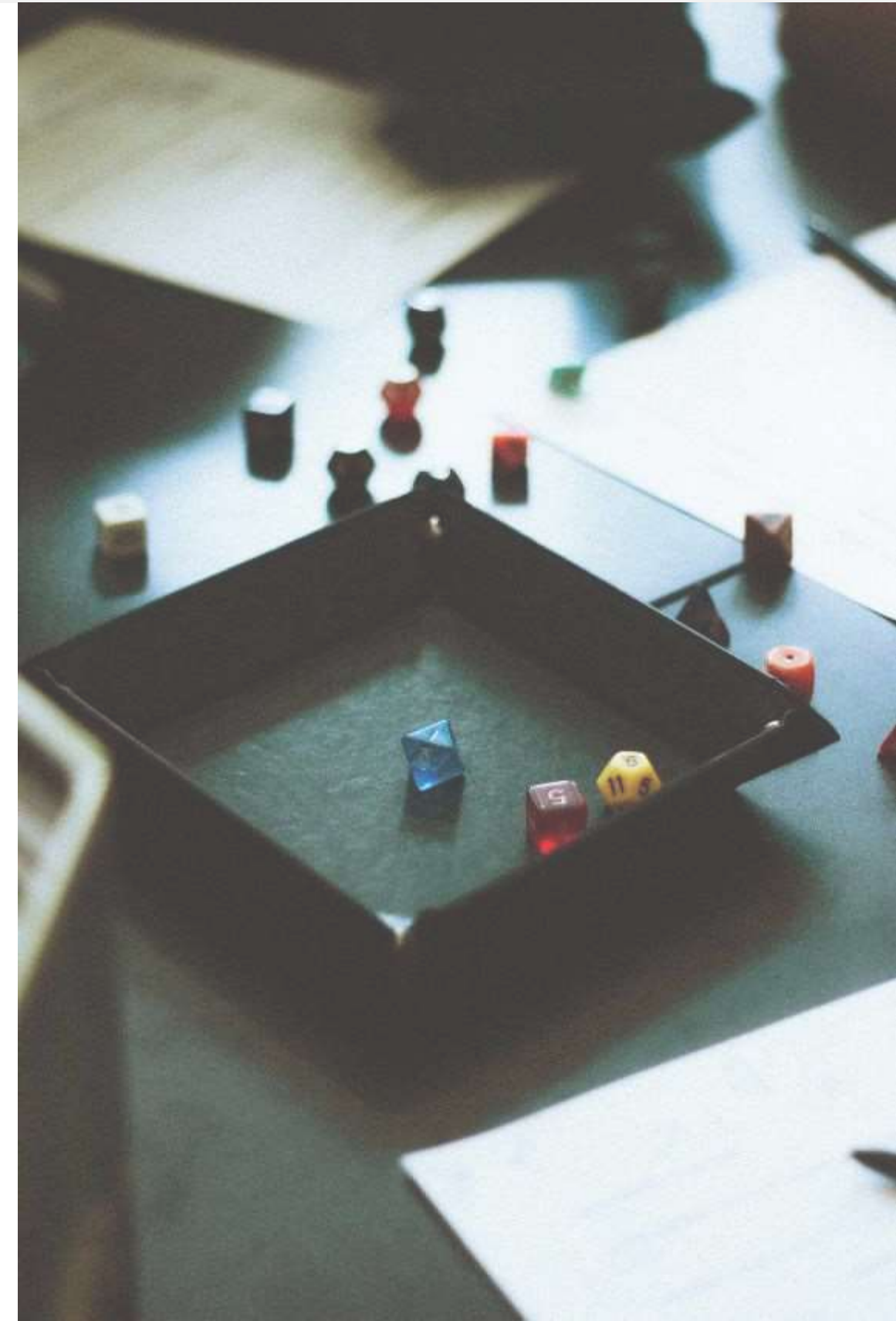
Discussion: Methodological Questions

- **Scoping Review Practices**
  - Should scoping reviews include quality appraisal in their interpretations? What's your take?

  - What are your views on excluding gray literature in developing research fields?

  - How do you see scoping reviews informing real-world clinical or therapeutic applications?
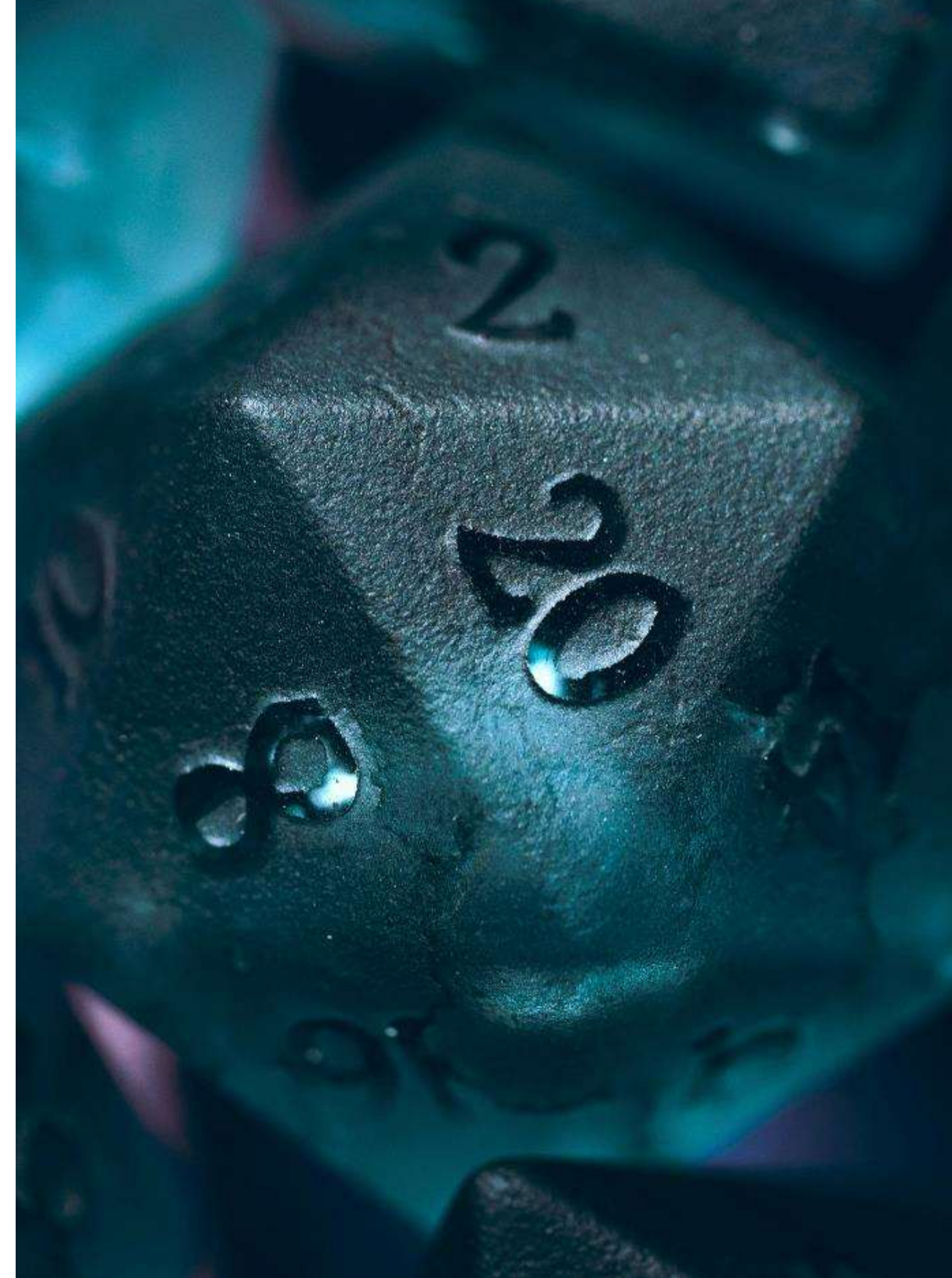
Thank You

Thank you for your attention.

We welcome your questions and insights.
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