Online Gaming and Its Affects on Students' Mental and Emotional Health: A Secondary-Data Analysis Research Article

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Abstract:

This paper synthesizes existing secondary data that studies how online gaming affects students' mental and emotional health. Drawing on published empirical studies, national surveys, and meta-analytic evidence, the review identifies both potential risks increased anxiety, depression, sleep disruption, and social withdrawal and potential benefits improved cognitive skills, social connectedness, and stress relief) associated with different patterns of gaming. The analysis highlights moderating factors such as gaming duration, game type, social context (solo vs multiplayer), individual vulnerability (preexisting mental-health conditions, and family/school environment. Implications for educators, parents, and policy makers are discussed, along with methodological limitations of the secondary data and recommendations for future research and practice.

1. Introduction:

Online gaming is a ubiquitous leisure activity among children and adolescents. With fast digital access and multiplayer platforms, students spend more productive time on online games. This raises critical questions about how gaming affects mental and emotional health and physical health during the constructive years of life. This paper performs a secondary-data synthesis to summarize the state of knowledge, identify consistent findings and gaps, and recommend evidence-based responses. The rapid expansion of digitalization play important role in the transformation of lifestyle. It changes learning, creation, and recreation of activities among the students in hole world. Digital innovations are quite common across the globe in terms of social connectivity, and searching from one social networking site to another such as Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, many dating websites and even online games. Students too have seen their activities enhanced by the digital world which connects them to the entire world. In the special case of online gaming has evolved into social interaction from a digital platform and attracts millions of students every day. Easy access to smartphones, Internet connectivity, and various types of gaming platforms make students more engaged online for social connections, competition, and entertainment. Gaming offers stimulate students to register themselves on those platforms that affect mental health and emotional health.

Gaming disorder inclusion in ICD-11

Gaming disorders with offline or online variations, based on the 11th edition of the International Classification of diseases, is medically known if the pattern and behavior of playing games alter the life of an individual, it make significantly a person significantly more impulsive in family, society, on occasion, and in education. In 2018, gaming behaviour was not limited to disorder, but also it was sure make impact on health, such as suffering from an

unhealthy diet, eyesight issues, hearing problems, sleep disturbance, and so many other psychological function disturbances.

2. Literature

I. Shrestha, et al. (2025), This study examined the addiction of how online gaming affects the mental health of teenagers in the Kathmandu Valley. As online games have become more popular and easier to access, many people are worried about their impact on young minds. The research was carried out using a survey method. A total of 207 students from four colleges filled out structured questionnaires. The objective of student is to understand how teenagers have opinion for online gaming and to know craving for the online gaming. All show to know effect of online gaming on mantel health, how teenagers gat off from social connections and trap in the depuration. Students who had higher levels of engagement with online games were found to have poor social relations and poor academic performance. They were found to be lonely.

This study contributed greatly by considering teenage groups residing in the Kathmandu Valley. This was very essential because this study helped to fill a great gap and give useful insights locally regarding how to maintain the mental health of adolescents.

R. Rahul, T. Krishnan R, et.al (2025), This study shows that in result, approx 18.79%of the participants were suffering from Internet gaming disorder. Among the youth, it was seen that factors such as gender, living situations, and gaming device time on gaming significantly affected. What is significantly more, the respondents who were suffering from Internet gaming disorder had anxiety and depression compared to normal people. This study shows that several levels of depression and anxiety are more prevalent among people with Internet gaming disorder. The study majorly focuses on mental health and is mental education.

María Carmen Martínez-Murciano, David Perez-Jorge (2025), Studies were done on university students for their physical, mental, and educational performance who were playing more video games than online games, asper PRISMA protocol, studies done at 16 educational institutes. This research shows how digital games are impacting academic performance in negative ways, as well as how online games destroy physical health. The results show that when you play our axis more digital video games for a long time, it creates a problem with sleep. It has a more impact on women. Technology is good for university students, but as a result, overuse of technology can have more impact on physical and mental health.

3. Research objectives

3.1 Summarize secondary-data evidence on the mental and emotional effects of online gaming among students.

3.2 Offer practical recommendations for schools, families, and future research.

4. Research Design and Methodology

This study uses a secondary-data synthesis approach: systematic review of published empirical research, meta-analyses, national survey results, and reputable reviews. The methodology for a researcher

5. Potential benefits of online gaming

5.1 Cognitive and perceptual benefits: Studies summarized in reviews report improvements in visuospatial skills, reaction time, and certain problem-solving tasks linked with specific game genres (e.g., action games).

5.2 Social conection and belonging: student are suffering from peer force, peer bonding and social support in online gaming for teenagers gaming communities is responsible for isolation, but they feel they gate protection against isolation with help of online gaming.

5.3 Frequent report of psychological studies: online games bust temporally Redus stress and increase enjoyment .

6. Impact of Online Gaming on Student's Mental and Emotional Health

6.1 Impact of online gaming on mental Health Issues

6.1.1 Anxiety and Depression

The most common mental health problems related to excessive online gaming, which students often suffer from, are anxiety and depression. From the secondary research, it is established that students who spend more time participating in online gaming activities are likely to be accompanied by persistent worry, nervousness, emotional highs and lows, and sad moods. Games such as online fighting require students to be successful, hence increasing their stress levels.

In addition, when students engage in online gaming as a way of escaping school pressures and other personal issues, they may also develop emotional dependence. This is because, when they are unable to engage in the activity, they tend to feel irritated, anxious, and depressed. From several studies, it has been identified that too much engagement in the activity results in reduced social interaction, thus causing feelings of loneliness.

6.1.2 Stress and Psychological Imbalance

Excessive online gaming leads to immense mental stress and psychological imbalance. The continuous exposure to brisk games, violence, and competition overstimulates the brains of students, so it becomes very difficult for them to be in a relaxed mood. Secondary data shows

that long-term gaming disrupts emotional stability and decreases the ability to cope with day-to-day life pressures.

On the other hand, excessive gaming can cause students to ignore academic responsibilities, physical activities, and social relationships. This can lead them to feel guilty, frustrated, and pressured mentally. In the long term, this unequal balance upsets the concentration and memory features necessary for learning and decision-making abilities.

6.1.3 Addiction and Behavioural Issues

Online gaming addiction is identified as a behavioral issue. According to secondary study findings, online gaming addiction behavior among students is characterized by factors such as a lack of control over gaming activities, neglecting personal and academic responsibilities, signs of withdrawal, and compulsive or obsessive gaming behavior.

Behavioral problems that are typically associated with the gaming addiction phenomenon include aggression, irritability, impatience, and poor social behaviour. One of the negative impacts that can be seen on the students is that they tend to withdraw themselves and rather communicate virtually than actually doing physical communications in real life. The World Health Organization has even classified the condition 'online gaming disorder' to be a mental health disorder.

6.1.4 Sleep syndromes

Sleep problems are one of the critical mental health impacts caused by too much online gaming. Through secondary data analysis, it is evident that the students who indulge in the online gaming activities during late night hours tend to have irregular sleep patterns, insomnia, and poor sleep quality. This is because the blue light emanating from the screen tends to disrupt the production of melatonin hormone and hence affects sleep.

Lack of sleep causes fatigue, irritability, lack of concentration, and emotional instability. Besides, in the long run, this leads to anxiety, depression, and poor academic performance. Research studies have indicated that sleep disturbance acts as a mediator between excessive gaming and poor mental health.

6.2 Impacts of online gaming on Emotional Health

6.2.1. Emotional instability

Emotional instability implies going through different emotions, emotional vulnerability, and inability to control one's emotions. It is indicated in the secondary studies that excessive online gaming among the students tends to lead to changes in moods quickly, for instance, going from excitement to frustration, anger, or sadness in a very short period.

The competitive nature of gaming causes high and lows not only physically but also emotionally due to winning and losing. Too much exposure to this creates high levels of emotional stress making it difficult to control emotions in actual life, thus causing emotional instability.

6.2.2. Irritability and Aggression

Irritability and aggression are quite common among the students who indulge in extensive gaming practices. It is indicated in the secondary data that the students who are exposed to violent and competitive online video games are known to become irritable and easily become short tempered and aggressive, especially when their gaming is interrupted. Gaming addiction causes emotional frustration and withdrawal which further causes aggressiveness. Several studies have proved a positive correlation between violence in games and aggressive emotions, particularly among adolescents.

6.2.3. Social Withdrawal

Social withdrawal implies less involvement with other people. Secondary research has revealed that students who play extensively prefer virtual interactions than face-to-face interactions. Eventually, emotional withdrawal from the family, friends, and peers becomes the consequence.

Online gaming may give temporary social satisfaction; however, it mostly lacks emotional depth. As a result, a student may fail to express their emotions and build up a relationship in real life, which may lead to loneliness and emotional isolation.

6.2.4. Reduced Emotional Control

Reduced emotional control refers to the inability to regulate emotions such as anger, frustration, and sadness. Secondary studies indicate that excessive gaming weakens emotional self-regulation mechanisms. Students may respond impulsively to minor stressors, showing poor frustration tolerance.

The continuous stimulation and instant reward systems in online games condition students to expect immediate gratification. This reduces patience and emotional discipline in real-life situations, affecting decision-making and emotional maturity.

WHO (2024), Report shows young kids play digital games every day. This number is approx. 34%, among them 22% spending a minimum of four hours a day on online games. Approx 68% players play non-problematic games, 12% were found playing problematic games, which is a serious issue for society. A study conducted by HBSC found that five countries were seriously involved in problematic online games in the study. It was found that

lower satisfaction with life and frequent mental health issues were associated with problematic online games in youngsters.

According to a new WHO report, there has been a rise in the number of problematic online gaming among teens, which could be attributed to the use of social media. In 2018, this percentage stood at 7%, while in 2022 it has risen to 11%. Apart from this, it has also been established that 12% of teens have been indulged in problematic games..

Zui C. Narita. Et.al. (2025). In this study, researchers found that students who had attention-deficit or hyperactivity problems at the age of 12 were involved in problematic online gaming. Adolescents were playing problematic games at age 14 years, and by age 16, they were supposed to have experienced mental disorders. There were 1,487 girls (46.9%) and 1,684 boys (53.1%). Increased use of problematic online games causes monetary risks, whereas mental health disorders like depression, mental sickness, and anxiety, along with dissatisfaction with life, lead to poor well-being. For example, the risk of depression increased by 7.8%, anxiety by 5.7%, psychotic experiences by 5.9%, and low well-being by 9.6%. The findings also showed that students with higher attention-deficit or hyperactivity scores were more likely to develop problematic gaming habits. Overall, the study suggests that early attention problems and excessive online gaming can negatively affect teenagers' mental health as they grow older. Secondary data reveal that effects are not uniform. Important moderators include:

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this secondary data research shows positive and negative impacts of online gaming on students' mental and emotional health. Positivity of online games can improve creativity, quick thinking, problem-solving skills, create good friends, and more social connectivity; it may reduce stress for a shorter period and improve hand-eye coordination. Multiplayer games can also help students build friendships, feel socially connected, and reduce stress for a short time. For some students, gaming becomes a way to relax after school and enjoy free time in a fun and interactive way.

However, the research clearly shows that excessive and uncontrolled gaming can create serious mental and emotional problems. There is a strong connection between problematic games addication and mental health issues like anxiety, depression, loneliness, aggression, and sleep disorders. Students who spend long hours gaming often ignore studies, physical activities, and family interactions. This can lead to poor academic performance and emotional imbalance. The recognition of "Gaming Disorder" by the World Health Organization also proves that problematic gaming is a real mental health concern. Recent data shows that a significant

percentage of adolescents are at risk of problematic gaming, which highlights the growing seriousness of this issue.

Overall, online gaming itself is not completely harmful, but the way it is used makes the difference. Balanced and limited gaming can be safe and even beneficial, while excessive gaming can negatively affect students' mental stability and emotional control. Therefore, parents, teachers, and schools should guide students about responsible gaming habits. Students should also learn self-control and time management. Upcoming research on digitalization, social media online applications need more preventive strategies to protect students and their mental health, emotional health in the era of digitalization.

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