

Exploring the Effects of Online Gaming on Senior High School Students' Academic Performance

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Abstract – As humanity delves more into digitalization, concerns arise about the effects of pervasive online gaming, particularly Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs). Most existing related studies utilize quantitative designs and lack in-depth and comprehensive exploration of how online gaming impacts students' academic performance. This study explored the experiences of senior high school students from St. Paul College of Ilocos Sur regarding the effects of MMORPGs on their academic performance using Phenomenology. The participants were determined through purposive sampling with the inclusion criteria: senior high school student, with a general average of 75-84, and played MMORPGs for more than a year. Three themes emerged based on the analysis of data: Escape, Efficiency, and Excursion, indicating varying aspects of MMORPG experiences. The participants viewed MMORPGs as a form of escape in the sense that they spend leisure time and have fun, and have a means to forget problems. Meanwhile, the participants got to enhance their efficiency as MMORPGs are an avenue for them to extend and seek help from others, and manage their time. However, MMORPGs are an excursion to them as they choose games over academics and chores, submit rushed and late requirements, and disrupts their body clock. Interventions from Academic, Homeroom, Student Affairs, and Guidance Units are recommended to direct student gamers to prioritize responsibilities, manage time strictly, and maintain reasonable gaming hours

Keywords: *online gaming, academic performance, MMORPGs, phenomenology*

I. INTRODUCTION

The pervasive influence of online gaming on the lives of adolescents raises concerns about its potential effects on the academic performance of students; thus, there is a need to regulate the use of online gaming. Online gaming comes in many forms. One of the most popular types is the MMORPGs or Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games. Due to the rapid growth of addiction rate and gaming disorders, consequential effects to the quality of outputs, time

management, physical and mental health, concentration, and socialization need to be addressed (Kumari, 2021; Shang Hwa Hsu, Ming-Hui Wen, Muh-Cherng Wu, 2009; Saputra, Marjohan, & Safrizal 2020; Anggraeni, Agustiani, Novianti, Ninin, 2021).

To address these effects on the students, the Department of Education (DepEd) released a memorandum DepEd Order 86 series of 2010 that prohibits students in public and private elementary and secondary schools from going to computer shops, malls, theaters, and the like during their class hours. The same memorandum also regulates the distance between computer shops from schools and directs owners of the said establishments not to allow entry of students during class hours. Furthermore, the Department of Education launched a program Dalir-Eskwela #BeCyberSafe Project to teach children how to be safe on the internet from cyberbullying, online game addiction, online chatting, and online pornography. Lastly, DepEd issued tablets that cannot download other applications such as games to prevent Online Gaming Addiction. According to Manila City Schools Division chief Maria Magdalena Lim, "No games may be installed on the tablet as this was specifically designed in a way that children cannot download any other applications".

From these memoranda, Saint Paul College of Ilocos Sur and other Paulinian schools in the country, and even other private schools created their own rules and regulations to contextualize the DepEd memoranda. SPCIS Student Handbook, 2019 (Chapter III Homeroom Unit, Section C General Guidelines, No. 10), states that students are not allowed to bring gadgets to school to prevent them from playing games during class hours in adherence to DepEd Order prohibiting students to play games during class hours.

Though gadgets help students finish their activities on time and enhance the quality of their outputs by utilizing online learning materials, students' lack of responsibility in using gadgets, causes a distraction through gaming, especially MMORPGs.

One type of online gaming is the Massively Multiplayer Online Role-playing Games or MMORPGs. This game allows players to connect with others worldwide and players can create avatars or characters that describe their unique features, gameplay activities, and characterization of the

virtual world game culture (Gadd & Kavanaugh, 2011; Lin & Sun, 2015). The player assumes the role of a character (often in a fantasy world or science-fiction world) and takes control over many of that character's actions.

Due to the integration of online gaming into everyday life, online gaming addiction has become a major problem all over the world. Playing intensively can lead to addiction (Thorens, 2016; Anggraeni, Agustiani, Novianti, Ninin, 2021) and can have negative impacts on all facets of life. This can lead to poorer mental health and cognitive functioning (Kumari, 2021; Shang Hwa Hsu, Ming-Hui Wen, Muh-Cherng Wu, 2009), sense of dependency, and difficulty controlling emotions (Saputra, Marjohan, & Safrizal 2020), and has negative impacts on socialization and concentration (Anggraeni, Agustiani, Novianti, Ninin, 2021). Furthermore, it can also cause inflammation of the tendons and muscles, including the deterioration of wrist nerves (Harvard Health, 2020).

To assess the effects of online gaming on academic performance, researchers correlate the gaming frequency and level of engagement of the student inside the classroom (Ortiz, et. al., 2022). Gaming frequency is defined as the amount of time a person plays online games daily (Ip, Jacobs, & Watkins, 2008) and academic performance is evaluated by the learner's achievements using competency-based grading systems which transmute the raw grades gathered from Performance Tasks, Written Works, and Quarterly Examinations (DepEd Order No. 8, s. 2015).

Existing literature suggests a negative impact of online gaming on academic performance. Specifically on the examination marks (Watkins, Jacob, Ip, 2008; Manandhar, & Timalseña, 2023), academic achievement (Ortiz, et. al., 2022; Feng, 2022), lower level of class performance (Farillon, et. al., 2022; and Johnston, 2011), lower quality of outputs (Garcia, Jarabe, & Paragas, 2018), and reduced cognitive engagement and academic motivation (Qi, Fang, & Hong, 2023; Ichia, Chen-Yi, & Lin, 2007). Furthermore, due to addiction, it negatively influences negative language expression, and decreased scholastic and speaking ability among juveniles (Pyoung, Seo, Miseon, Chang-Hwan, & Young-Min, 2013; Ramadhani et al., 2021).

However, some articles vindicate online gaming, which positively affects academic performance. It shows positive effects on academic achievement, motivation, and social support (Prasetyo, et. al., 2021; Lin, Hung, Fang, & Tu, 2015; and Zakaria et al., 2022), higher Grade Point Average (Concepcion, Nales-Torres, & Zubiaurre, 2017; and Dumrique & Castillo, 2018), enhances learning skills and support proficiency learning (Canares, Dioso, 2023), improvements of learners' performance (Bawa, Watsons, & Watsons 2018; and Bokyeong, Hyungsung, & Youngkyun, 2008), and scholastic ability with higher level of logical-numerical performance (Souza, de Lima, Roazzi, 2010; and Yang, & Quadir, 2018). Lastly, it shows that MMORPGs can be used as educational tools for collaborative learning environment (Malliarakis, Satratzemi, & Xinogalos, 2014; and Paraskeva, Mysirlaki, & Papagianni, 2010)

While there are past literatures that examined the negative effects of online gaming to academic performance (Watkins, Jacob, Ip, 2008; Ortiz, et. al., 2022; Feng, 2022; Farillon, et. al., 2022; Johnston, 2011; Garcia, Jarabe, & Paragas, 2018; Qi, Fang, & Hong, 2023; Ichia, Chen-Yi, & Lin, 2007; and Pyoung, Seo, Miseon, Chang-Hwan, & Young-Min, 2013) and positive effects (Prasetyo, et. al., 2021; Lin, Hung, Fang, & Tu, 2015; Concepcion, Nales-Torres, & Zubiaurre, 2017; Canares, Dioso, n.d.; Bawa, Watsons, & Watsons 2018; Bokyeong, Hyungsung, & Youngkyun, 2008; Souza, de Lima, Roazzi, 2010; Yang, & Quadir, 2018; Malliarakis, Satratzemi, & Xinogalos, 2014; Zakaria et al., 2022; Dumrique & Castillo, 2018; and Paraskeva, Mysirlaki, & Papagianni, 2009), most of these studies are quantitative design and have failed to give an in-depth understanding on how online gaming affects academic performance of students and there are only limited number of literatures that explain the experiences and perceptions of people in a holistic point of view.

This research aimed to fill a critical gap in the literature by conducting a phenomenological study that examined the effects of online gaming on the academic performance of students. By employing a qualitative research design, it created bridges and interpretations of students' stories and personal accounts, resulting in a holistic view of the effects of online gaming on their academic performance.

Furthermore, this study was of great significance to the field of education, as it helped members of the community gain a holistic perception and in-depth understanding of the effects of online gaming, such as Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs), on the academic performance of students.

These are the underlying reasons that motivated the researchers to study the effects of online gaming on the academic performance of students by gathering their narratives and experiences.

Research Questions/Objectives

The phenomenological study, titled Exploring the Effects of Online Gaming on Senior High School Students' Academic Performance, aimed to delve into and examine the experiences concerning the effects of online gaming, particularly MMORPGs on the academic performance of senior high school students at St. Paul College of Ilocos Sur during the academic year 2023-2024. Additionally, it sought to offer insights to other researchers undertaking similar studies.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study will help the members of the community gain in-depth information about the effects of online gaming on the academic performance of senior high school students. The researchers believe that the findings of this study are critical to society, especially to those specializing in the field of education and to the students themselves. This study is beneficial to the following:

Online Gamers. This study helps student gamers make educated decisions about how to balance gaming and

academics by providing information about possible distractions and time management issues related to MMORPGs. Moreover, this helps them create a sensible study routine, identify risk factors such as online gaming addiction, set reasonable priorities, and provide insights on how much gaming frequency is acceptable without significantly affecting their academic performance.

Student Governments and Policy Makers. The findings of this study can aid certain groups or organizations in the formulation of guidelines for healthy online gaming usage, fostering a positive online environment for students.

Teachers. This study also helps teachers to proactively handle problems, which helps students who play MMORPGs have a better educational experience. With the findings of the study, teachers can fully understand the experiences of student gamers that affect their competency and learning engagement in classroom settings.

St. Paul College of Ilocos Sur. The findings of the study may pave the way for the school administration to understand the experiences of student gamers and be provided with evidence-based strategies for incorporating online gaming to improve students' academic performance. Alternatively, if negative effects are identified, the school will promote the reduction of screen time.

Parents/Guardians. This study helps parents and guardians manage their children's online activities by making informed decisions about screen time and gaming frequency. This also urges them to hold discussions with their kids about appropriate gaming practices, impose screen time limitations, and offer advice on striking a balance between gaming and academic obligations.

Future Researchers. This study can serve as a starting point for future researchers on changing the connection between MMORPGs and the academic performance of students. The results can help them conduct more studies, promote a better comprehension of the intricate processes at play, and contribute to the ongoing discourse on the impact of online gaming to the students' academic performance. Lastly, this paper can serve as related literature for future researchers who plan to explore the same topic.

II. METHODS

A. Research Design

The researchers employed a phenomenological approach. This method was chosen as it aimed to delve into and comprehend the profound perceptions and experiences of the participants regarding a specific phenomenon. According to Gallagher (2022), phenomenology involves exploring various events and lived experiences of the participants. Additionally, Gallagher emphasized its significance in understanding the participants' experiences within a specific focus. This notion of conducting a thorough inquiry into a phenomenon based on narratives and experiences is further supported by Smith and Sparkes (2009), who analyzed the experiences of marginalized individuals.

This research design enabled the researchers to capture information that authentically reflected the reality of the situation, facilitating an accurate interpretation of the findings. Griffiths et al. (2006) investigated the effects of online gaming, particularly MMORPGs, aiming to understand how gamers perceive and contextualize the game in their lives. Therefore, the researchers opted for a phenomenological approach because it is well-suited for comprehending the profound experiences concerning the effects of online gaming on the academic performance of Senior High School students at St. Paul College of Ilocos Sur.

B. Locale of the Study

The whole study is solely conducted at St. Paul College of Ilocos Sur (SPCIS) specifically in the High School Department, Academic Year 2023-2024. The institution is located at St. Paul Avenue, 2727 Bantay, Ilocos Sur.

The researchers chose the locale having observed among the Senior High School students, high engagement in online gaming. Having administered a presurvey, it was found out that among the 297 Senior High School students, 11 are online gamers. St. Paul College of Ilocos Sur, known for serving students with academic excellence and helping them achieve their dreams beyond expectation, sets high yet realistic academic goals for the students. Seeing and confirming the high engagement with online gaming among students prompted the researchers to work on this problem.

C. Participants of the Study

The participants were selected through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method that occurs when the elements selected for the sample are chosen according to the judgment of the researchers (Patton, 2002). The researchers administered a pre-survey among all Senior High School students. The pre-survey included the following inclusion criteria which served as the basis for determining the participants:

- must be enrolled as Grade 11 or Grade 12 students in SPCIS for AY 2023-2024;
 - obtained a general average of 75-84 for the first quarter of AY 2023-2024; and
 - has played MMORPG for more than one year
- d. The participants were (4) four Senior High School students of St. Paul College of Ilocos Sur enrolled in the School Year 2023-2024. There were (2) two participants for the Pilot Interview and (2) two participants for the Formal Interview.

D. Instrument

The researchers used a validated researcher-made semi-structured interview guide to collect data. In developing the interview questions, the researchers used the process proposed by De Guzman & Hapan (2013), which goes as follows: 1) set the concept or layer of human experience that the study will be focusing on, in this case, effects of online

gaming to academic performance; 2) define the concept or layer of experience; 3) formulate the priori codes using the definition/s; and 4) devise the interview questions based on the codes formulated.

To establish the credibility and accuracy of the constructed interview guide, the researchers sought the validation and approval of three experts in the field of education.

E. Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers sought the approval of the Basic Education Principal in conducting the study. Once it was approved, the researchers oriented the possible participants of the study of the research objectives and their rights as research participants. Consent forms were given before the interview to give the participants time to ponder. With the consent of the participants to take part in the study, the researchers conducted pilot and formal interviews in a secluded and private place, specifically in the Guidance Testing Center. Moreover, the researchers asked the permission of the participants to voice-record the interview to aid in the gathering of data and analysis of responses.

The instrument that was used by the researchers to conduct this study is the semi-structured interview guide. Before the formal interview, the researchers conducted a pilot interview because it was seen as an integral part and beneficial in the process of conducting qualitative research for the reason that it highlights the improvisation of the major study (Aung, et. al., 2021). Moreover, Ismail et al. (2017), stated that pilot testing is crucial since it gives feedback that the researchers can utilize in making adjustments and to refine the research methodologies before attempting to conduct the final study. The pilot interviews and semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face in the Guidance Testing Center due to its nature as a secluded and private place to protect the privacy and anonymity of the participants.

Once the data was gathered, the recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim to facilitate the gathering and analysis of the participants' experiences and narratives.

F. Data Analysis

In exploring the experiences of the participants in the effects of online gaming on academic performance, thematic analysis was used, with an inductive approach which allowed the researchers to derive the themes exclusively from the obtained data. Adopted from Braun and Clarke's (2006) Six Phases of Thematic Analysis, the process of analyzing and interpreting the data used is as follows:

1. Data familiarization: This step encompasses the transcription of data, thorough reading and re-reading, and the recording of initial ideas. Key concepts from each transcript will be emphasized and documented.
2. Generating initial code: According to Braun and Clarke, (2006), it is the coding of interesting features from the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, and collecting data relevant to each code. During the

process of translation and transcription, sections of the transcribed text relevant to the study will be labeled and coded to describe their content

3. Searching for themes: Braun and Clarke, (2006), stated that it is searching of potential themes from codes and categorizing the relevant codes to each potential theme. The themes that will be chosen are the ones that answer the research problem, and the codes that will be found irrelevant will be discarded.
4. Reviewing themes: In this part, the identified themes will be compared against the data and evaluated whether they are pertinent, helpful, and separable from other themes. The researchers will look into the themes precisely and accurately to identify if there is a need to integrate, split, or eliminate the gathered data in order to make the analysis more meaningful.
5. Defining and naming themes: after the finalization of the list of themes, the researchers will define themes by utilizing the operational definition of terms in order to help people understand the data. Naming the themes will be coining a clear and engaging name.
6. Producing the findings: The final analysis; selection of vivid, compelling extracted examples, the final analysis of selected extracts, relating to the analysis to their search question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the final phase, the researcher will address the themes, describing and explaining each theme while citing evidence from the data to support the analysis. After which, it will be followed with brief conclusion that explains how the research problem is answered.

From there, the generated codes and themes were subjected to member checking to validate the findings from the participants. Hence, the analysis of the data was returned to the participants. This ensured that the findings and conclusions of the phenomenological study represent their experiences with the effects of online gaming on academic performance.

III. RESULTS

From the conducted formal semi-structured interviews with the participants, the researchers found (3) three emergent themes called the 3 E's: (1) Escape, (2) Efficiency, and (3) Excursion.

Within these themes, they are organized into several subthemes. First, the subthemes under Escape are (1.1) spending leisure time and having fun, and (1.2) means to forget problems. For the second theme: (2.1) avenue to extend and seek help from others, and (2.2) managing time. Lastly, the subthemes organized under Excursion are (3.1) choosing games over academics and chores, (3.2) submitting rushed and late activities, and (3.3) disruption of body clock.

IV. DISCUSSION

Theme 1: Escape

The first emergent theme was created upon the experiences and stories of the participants on how online gaming specifically Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs) can help their lives in any aspect such as easing boredom, having fun, and forgetting their problems. The participants use this online gaming activity to escape from reality; escape from their problems by forgetting them; and escape from their boredom by amusing themselves.

This encompasses the role of online gaming, specifically Massively Multiplayer Online-Role Playing Games (MMORPGs), in helping the participants escape from their problems and somewhat divert their attention toward a more peaceful reality. This is the activity that makes them detached from reality. Also, it encompasses that online gaming is a very interactive and enjoyable activity by teens and adults. This theme supports the findings of recently conducted studies stating that MMORPGs are very self-entertaining activities to ease boredom (Sinanto, Djannah, & Tentama, 2021). Moreover, as it rises in popularity, people use this activity to spend their leisure time (Chambers, Feng, Sahu, Saha, Brandt, 2010; Dumrique, D., & Castillo, J., 2018). Lastly, it presents that when humans have nothing to do, they find ways to entertain themselves. This supports the study of the University of Copenhagen (2010) and Harvard University (2021), that humans constantly crave for stimulation and entertainment due to the dopamine's actions in the brain.

It also encompasses the idea of avoidance coping mechanism, which is a behavior-oriented on denying, minimizing, or directly avoiding the stressful stimuli or demands (Cronkite & Moos, 1995). Furthermore, according to Leverson (2024), it constitutes a type of coping mechanism involving isolation from others, ignoring problems, distraction, and denial. It tends to be passive and evasive. Moreover, it is a way for the participants to detach themselves from reality and move into a more peaceful place, in this case, the online gaming platforms. Finally, the participants shared their stressors and the problems they face, along with how online gaming, especially MMORPGs, can help alleviate the burdens they carry. The findings of this study also back the findings of Salih & Muhaimin (2019), who found out that adolescents who experience loneliness have more tendency to play online games because they use this as a way of escaping real-life problems.

Subtheme 1.1: Spending leisure time and having fun

This subtheme encompasses the way that the participants utilize their free time by playing online games: P2: "... kasla kuma pagikkat lang boring... ken kasla metla nuh tapno malibang jay pagkaboring mo." (Just to remove boredom... and just to amuse myself and get rid of boredom)

Moreover, it also shows how Participant 1 was influenced by her peers to play and have fun:

P1: "[I play] lalo nu agayab dagijay friends ko G na G (go na go) nak" ([I play] especially when my friends call me, I always agree)

Lastly, Participant 2 also shared his experiences with his online friends while playing games. He shows comfortability

with each other to the point of making fun and trash-talking each other:

P2: "adda nong, nuh kuma madama ti dagijay kaayayam ko ket kasla kikinnatawa tapos trash talk" (There is bro, especially when we laugh and trash talk with my friends together)

This finding supports the study of Demetrovics, et. al. (2011), stating that online games represent new ways of satisfying basic human needs. Moreover, people's primary motivation for playing online games is to have fun and experience enjoyment (Sherry, et. al, 2006). Lastly, it supports the study of Martončik, M., & Lokša, J. (2020) stating that MMORPG players experience loneliness in the real world as it contributes to players' feeling of enjoyment.

Subtheme 1.2: Means to forget problems

The second subtheme shows how the participants face personal and household problems. Yet, as they immerse themselves in playing online games, they gradually forget their problems and slowly detach themselves from reality:

P1: "uhm... siguro kasi adda ti napasamak kanyak ti like family problems, kasi may daldalak latta, jak maiwasan like relasyon kasjay... ngem nu mas tumagtagal nak aggagame maliptak to ejayen" (I think, it's because there are some problems like family-related ones that I encounter which I find hard to forget, or prevent, however, as I immerse myself in playing, I gradually forget about it)

This illustrates their coping mechanism for dealing with the problems they encounter, utilizing online gaming as a haven to temporarily forget about their troubles. Furthermore, the second participant emphasized the significance of utilizing online games not only to cope with stress but also to alleviate the boredom they experience:

P2: "adda latta met maytulong [the online games] na kenka nong kasla kuma nuh... uhm... maborboring ka, stressed ket matulongan naka met nga kasla mai-cope dejay nga kwa ti kwam nong [problems]" (There's also help that [the online games] can give you... like... uhm... if you are bored, stressed, it can help you to cope up with it)

This subtheme supports the findings of Snodgrass, et. al., (2011) that MMORPG creates an entertaining experience that allows players to escape from everyday stresses. Moreover, it concretized the study of Kardefelt-Winther (2014), stating that individuals with high levels of stress and negative emotions were more likely to play online games as a form of coping mechanism and problem avoidance. Lastly, this subtheme agrees with Brandão et. al., (2023), stating that online games are a form of escapism or avoidance to real-life problems.

Theme 2: Efficiency

This theme revolves around students' ability to leverage their resources in propelling themselves towards an advantageous position. It emerged from their narrated experiences of how they utilized their friends, both physically and online, as well as the skills, traits, and values they acquired to enhance their efficiency in performing their activities and responsibilities.

Under the theme Efficiency, it encapsulates the initiatives that the participants have undertaken to submit high-quality outputs through the application of skills and talents honed while playing MMORPGs. Moreover, it reflects the ability and resourcefulness of the participants to utilize all available resources to achieve an end goal.

These findings back the studies of Zakaria et al. (2022) and Hussain, Z., & Griffiths, M., (2014) that playing online games can serve as a way to improve solidarity and positive social interactions by promoting a sense of belongingness. This means that the participants are using online games to extend and seek help from others about the problems they face. Moreover, MMORPGs can be an effective way to increase students' performance in learning by keeping them involved in social problem-solving activities (Bokyeong, Hyungsung, & Youngkyun, 2008; Kannan et al., 2023).

Lastly, Werdinia et al. (2021) posited that there is a positive correlation between dependency on playing online games and time management. This suggests that the more students play, the more they develop respect for time management and a sense of time.

Subtheme 2.1: Avenue to extend and seek help from others

This subtheme portrays that online gaming can create a collaborative relationship with other people aimed at improving their academics. For example, Participant 2 shared his experiences on how his friends help him with his schoolwork by addressing his queries and questions:

P2: "Agtitinnulong kami [in making activities] metlaeng ejay nong, kasla kuma nuh... uhm... damagem nu about edjay [instructions] ket ibaga da met" (We help each other [in making activities] ... like... uhm... when I ask about that [instructions] then, they answer)

Their collaborative relationship also extends beyond the confines of online gaming platforms. Participant 2 said that it is also applied in school settings:

P2: "Nu jay skwela nong, keh kasla kuma group activities, agtitinnulong kayo met kasjay, kasla kuma metlang nuh... kwa nong... jay maysa agdamag kasjay." (In school settings, during group activity making, you help each other... like... like... when one asks questions)

The second participant also posited that the help he can get does not only confine itself to group activities, but also to individual activities:

P2: "Kasla kuma kwa nong, nu dagiti performance task ta mesa-mesa lang (individual outputs), damagem nuh kasano pamay-an nong ket isuro da met" (like in performance tasks... when creating individual outputs, if you ask them questions on what to do, they will teach you)

On the other hand, the first participant also expressed the same sentiment, stating that she utilizes online gaming and the relationships she built while playing as avenues to seek help from others, especially regarding school activities and research subject:

P1: "jay immuna ket nagpatulong nak if ano ilagay ko sa ano... kwa... edjay circle-circle [Venn diagram]" (the first

time is when I sought for their help on what to put in the Venn diagram)

P1: "nung second is kung ano pa ang kulang sa research namin" (the second time is when I asked about what is missing on my research output)

This subtheme concretized the findings that online gaming can provide social support and help players improve their ability to engage in activities (Trepte et al., 2012). Moreover, it supports the study of Zheng, et. al. (2009) and Bursali and Yilmaz (2019), stating that online gaming friends can facilitate collaborative learning and group projects.

Subtheme 2.2: Managing time

This subtheme under Efficiency shows how the two participants allocated time for playing online games and studying:

P1: "if may matapos man ako [na activities], maglalaro ako [ng online games]" (if ever I'll finish [activities], I play [online games])

The second participant also shared his daily schedule in which he finishes the activities right after it is given to him to prevent any backlogs:

P2: "kwa nong... ugh... kasla kuma inted da tatta [the activities], karabiyang na ket aramidekon tapno kabigatan na ket mabalin nga ipasan" (Like... ugh... for example when they assigned the activities, I'll finish it in the evening so that I can pass it the next day)

Moreover, Participant 2 also emphasized that to prevent negative effects on grades, it is necessary to balance the time allocated to playing games and doing activities:

P2: "tapno haan maapektaran metlang jay panagadal mo or panagbasam kasya, ikkam latta met ti oras mo [in studying]" (To prevent negative effects on your studies, you need to allocate time [in studying])

Participant 1 demonstrates the virtue of self-control by resisting the urge to play another round and instead starts engaging in activities:

P1: "dadduma, ket nu malpas nak ti mesa game, haan nak to aggame'n agaramid nak to lattan [activities]" (sometimes, after one game, I will stop playing and continue doing my activities)

This subtheme also backed up the findings of Seok & DaCosta (2014) stating that online gamers developed advanced time management abilities to balance their gaming with schoolwork and other responsibilities. Moreover, it also corroborates the other study that participants develop effective time management strategies to prevent their gaming schedule from interfering with other responsibilities (Nalwoga et al., 2024).

Theme 3: Excursion

Contrary to the used and well-known definition of excursion, it is not merely about a short journey or a leisure activity, but in this context, it tackles about the deviation of one's normal responsibilities and routines. From its etymology, in Latin, the prefix ex- means "out of" and the verb currere means "to run". When the two are put together,

they form the verb *excurrere*, literally "to run out" or "to extend." In the case of excessive online gaming, the "excursion" refers to the gamer's departure from their usual responsibilities, routines, and reality. This etymological connection highlights how online gaming can facilitate an escape or "running out" from the requirements of the real world, contributing to a sense of irresponsibility, disrupted body clocks, and rushed, low-quality work as gamers immerse themselves in the gaming environment at the expense of their other duties and commitments.

The topics that were extracted were lack of organization, disorder, and disruption of natural and normal routines and behaviors. Excessive or problematic online gaming has been linked to decreased self-control, procrastination, and an external locus of control in several research studies (Qi, Fang, & Hong 2023; Johnston, 2011; Kuss, 2013; and Liu & Brown, 2014). This suggests that the immersive nature of online games can lead some individuals to neglect important responsibilities and obligations in their lives.

The findings of this study support the idea that excessive online gaming can lead to a decreased sense of responsibility and self-control (Männikkö et al., 2015). Moreover, this paper posited that the more time people spend gaming online, the more they tend to neglect other obligations and responsibilities in their lives. Furthermore, it backs the research of Liu and Brown (2014), that online gaming is associated with lower levels of self-regulation and has greater tendency to procrastinate on important tasks. Lastly, this emergent theme supported the study of Exelmans & den Bulck (2022) and Kuss (2013), that online gaming can disrupt the body's natural circadian rhythms or natural body clock. It was also added that due to online gaming, the users experience irregular sleeping patterns, daytime fatigue, and difficulty falling asleep during the evenings.

On the other hand, although these findings show that online gaming can serve as a deviation and departure from standard expectations or behaviors, they contradict the initial findings on Theme 2 – Efficiency. This is because this theme revolves around the participants' sense of irresponsibility caused by online gaming, while the second theme shows how online gaming can be beneficial and serve as an avenue for the participants to extend and seek help from others. Lastly, these findings contradict the initial findings of the second theme because this talks about the participants' irresponsibility in submitting activities, while the other talks about the participants' way of showing their time management skills.

Subtheme 3.1: Choosing games over academics and chores

This subtheme under Excursion shows how gaming addiction can distract the two participants from studying:

P1: "lalo nu medyo naadict kan, kasjay... mas kayat mo gamin nga [play games]" (When you get addicted, you will choose gaming more often)

Participant 1 demonstrated that one of the effects of the addiction is making her choose MMORPGs more than finishing activities:

P1: "wen, mas pilyek agayayam kesa aggawa ti... lackings ko" (I chose to play games rather than... do my backlogs)

It also reaches the point where their responsibilities as students are forgotten, such as reviewing and completely forgetting their academics:

P1: "kayat ko agay-ayam latta uray ado ti pending nga ubraek... uray nu masapol ko agreview" (I like to play games even if I have pending tasks left... even if I need to review)

The distraction can also be observed during online classes:

P1: "uhm... nu adjay nak laptop ko diba, adda ti gawaek... lalo jay online class kuma, keh uray nu adda ti zoom meeting kasjay ket aggagame nak latta..." (uhm... whenever I'm on my laptop, especially during online class, like zoom meeting, I play games)

Moreover, online gaming can also affect the way the Participant 1 perform her household responsibilities:

P1: "like haan ko ububraen dejay papagawa ni mama kasi naka focus nak jay ay-ayam ko" (like I don't follow what my mom tells me to do because I always focus on playing)

Additionally, Participant 2 mentioned that gaming prevents him from sharing meals together, thereby undermining the significance of mealtime, a cherished Filipino cultural tradition:

P1: "haan nak makisabsabay mangan kasi aggagame nak" (I don't eat my meals with them because I play games)

Due to constantly prioritizing games over academics, the participants find themselves caught in a procrastination loop, where they repeatedly delay starting a task until later, resulting in nothing being accomplished:

P1: "haanen, like "masadotakon nu bigat ton" kasjay ti kunak, gana haan ko nga maububran (Procrastination Loop)" (No, it's like I always say, 'I'll do it tomorrow,' until it results in nothing being accomplished)

Participant 2 also expressed a similar sentiment, stating that playing online games prevents him from initiating activities:

P2: "Dadduma nuh narugyanam agay-ayamen nong, kasla kuma met nu adda pay kuma activity'm nga ipasa ti lunes... ta nagay-ayam ka ti malem ti domingo, kasla masadot kanto met nga agubran ta namayatan met ti nagay-ayamen" (Sometimes, when I've started playing games, I have a hard time starting my activities even though they're due tomorrow. It's like I feel lazy because I'm enjoying playing games)

As a consequence, Participant 1 shared that she does not have enough time to complete the activities:

P1: "awan oras ko [in making activities] kasi mas pinilik maglaro" (I don't have time [in making activities] because I chose to play"

P1: "uhmm... edjay garod, naubusan nak ti time talaga ti studies ko" (uhm... I ran out of time for my studies)

Finally, the two participants were asked if they would like to integrate online gaming into the curriculum, however, they disagreed saying that they might choose to play rather than to study:

P2: "Deta gamin [MMORPGs] ay-ayam eh... kasla gamin etan to ti ad-adalen dan" (MMORPG is a game... like students will focus more on that rather than studying)

P1: “there’s possibility nga mas pilyem agayayam” (There’s a possibility that students will choose to play rather than doing anything else)

The findings of this study back up the research of Turel & Osatuyi (2017), who observed that online gaming can lead to a decreased sense of responsibility and neglect of important tasks. Moreover, it also supports the findings that showed adolescent gamers exhibit higher levels of irresponsibility, lack of self-control, and neglect of school and family responsibilities (Vadlin et al., 2016). Furthermore, it supports the study of Van Rooij, et. al. (2010) which states that excessive amounts of time spent playing MMORPGs can severely disrupt school, work, and social responsibilities. Lastly, this subtheme supports the findings of the study which states that online games can influence a student to neglect their study schedules and school assignments (Nuruzzaman, 2020).

Subtheme 3.2: Submitting rushed and late activities

As a result of their procrastination loop and their behavior of choosing online games rather than doing their responsibilities, the participants settled for mediocrity or so-called ‘compliance’s sake tasks’:

P2: “wen, makapasa [ng activities] la ketdi” (yes, as long as I can pass my activities)

Moreover, mediocre works are also observed in the outputs of the second participant because he does not completely proofread and revise his outputs after finishing it:

P2: “nong, nu nya lang naisurat kon ket isu lattan” (Whatever I finished, it will remain just as it is)

Participant 1 also added that she was not thoroughly reading the given questions and instructions. Her main goal is simply to pass activities, regardless of whether it has quality or not:

P1: “kasi jak awaten nu kwa... Dagijay questions’n like if essay edjay, jak awatenen, aggawa nak lattan basta adda maypasak” (I will not fully comprehend the essay questions or the topics. I will simply answer them to ensure I pass something.)

Aside from the qualities of their outputs, their punctuality was also affected. Participant 1 shared that she is still creating outputs even when the deadline has already approached:

P1: “Like nu deadline mismon, agububra nak to palang wenko kinaumagahan, na kuma ket deadline, agububra nak to palang” (like I’m still doing activities as the deadline approaches rapidly, or at times, I find myself still doing activities even after the deadline has passed.)

Lastly, when Participant 1 was asked about what she does whenever there’s a challenging activity, she responded:

P1: “it’s either haan ko ipasan, or gagawin ko pero late na” (It’s either I will not pass or be late)

The subtheme, submitting rushed and late requirements supports the findings of Setiawati & Setyowati (2021) who stated that a higher level of gaming frequency is directly proportional to a higher level of academic stress due to submission of late requirements. Moreover, this study backs up the findings which mention that students who spent more time playing online games tended to have lower grades and

were more likely to miss classes or deadlines (Gentile et al., 2011).

Subtheme 3.3: Disruption of body clock

For the last subtheme, due to the irresponsibility of students, their body clock or sleeping schedule is affected. Moreover, the participants choose to play rather than spend it sleeping, causing disruptions in sleeping time:

P1: “uhm... nadadael sleeping- ah ti body clock ko kakaayayam” (uhm... my sleeping- ah body clock was disrupted because of playing)

As a result of the disrupted sleeping schedule, Participant 1 experiences a lack of sleep. The first participant also mentioned that she sacrificed their time just to play online games:

P1: “Wen kasi puyat nak kakaayayam... kasi umabot pay to haan nak matulog kakaay-ayam” (Yes, because I stayed up late playing games... then it came to the point where I can’t sleep because of playing)

Moreover, she also added that she stays up late until 3:00 AM just to complete the activities. This shows how she sacrificed her sleeping time to make up for the lost time spent playing games:

P1: “Kayak aggawa gana mga siguro three [3:00 AM] kasjay... kayak agpuyat gana kasjay” (I can do it until three [3:00 AM] because I can stay up that late)

They also shared that they are mostly active at night, which causes them to have a lack of focus and makes them lazy to do tasks. This is another reason why their body clock is disrupted:

P1: “Mas active nak ti rabii, nasabsabogak, tas ay masadsadot nak agaramid” (I am more active at night, I feel haggard, and oh, I feel lazy to do my works)

Finally, this shows that they feel very sleepy at school, leading to a lack of participation and engagement in educational activities due to sleeping during classes:

P1: “Lagi nak tulog toy skwela” (I am always sleeping in class)

The findings of this study particularly on the disruption of body clocks support the study of Sinanto, et. al. (2021) which states that online gamers often stay up late because they were not satisfied with the game and could not control themselves resulting in disturbances in sleep patterns and limited sleeping time. Moreover, the findings also support the study conducted by Fitria (2019) stating that there is a long relationship between online gameplay and sleep disorders. Lastly, it backs up the study of Lam (2014), which suggests that online gaming, particularly massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs), might be associated with poorer quality of sleep.

V. CONCLUSION

In the light of the findings, the following conclusions are drawn from the study: that online gaming is a deviation from the participants’ reality: their problems, boredom, and academic responsibilities; that online gaming is an avenue for the participants to extend help to others and effectively

manage their time; and that online gaming is an excuse from their academic and household responsibilities and body clock.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions drawn, the following are recommended by the researchers.

1. The Academic Unit of the school may establish Peer Support Programs to encourage students to take a helping role in assisting other students struggling with their academics.
2. The Homeroom and Guidance Services Units may provide frequent interventions like sessions on time management or effective study habits to teach students how to effectively allocate tasks while acknowledging the importance of leisure activities.
3. The Student Affairs Unit may offer more physical activities and sports services to Skill Identification and Goal-Driven Learning for the Advancement of Talents (SIGLAT) Program for the students to seek enjoyment and spend leisure time without using online games.
4. The Homeroom and Guidance Services Units may provide sessions to parents on managing their child's screen time and gaming frequency to prevent gaming addiction.
5. The parents and guardians may devise ways to let online gamers effectively manage their time and accomplish their responsibilities before engaging in gaming.
6. Further research may be conducted with more extensive coverage using Mixed Methods to further explore the lived experiences of online gamers and their academics.

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