

Mental Health Issues Among Online Game Addicts at Smpn 2 Dolopo, Dolopo District, Madiun Regency

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Abstract

Online gaming addiction is increasingly recognized as a behavioral disorder that can lead to various psychological and social problems, including anxiety, depression, and decreased academic performance. This research aims to evaluate the relationship between the level of online game addiction and symptoms of anxiety and depression among students at SMPN 2 Dolopo. The study employed an observational analytical design with a cross-sectional approach. A total of 58 students identified as online game addicts were selected using simple random sampling. Data were collected through validated questionnaires measuring the level of online game addiction, as well as anxiety and depression symptoms based on the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS). Data analysis was conducted using Spearman's correlation test. The results show that among the 58 respondents, most were male (91.4%), with the highest distribution found in the moderate addiction category (41.4%). The majority of respondents exhibited normal levels of anxiety (81.0%) and depression (82.8%). Statistical analysis revealed a significant correlation between the level of online game addiction and anxiety ($r = 0.304$; $p = 0.020$), while no significant association was found with depression ($r = 0.246$; $p = 0.062$). These findings indicate that online game addiction affects students' anxiety levels but is not proven to be associated with depression. The study underscores the importance of addressing psychological well-being as part of interventions for students struggling with online game addiction at SMPN 2 Dolopo, Dolopo District, Madiun Regency.

Keywords: rheumatoid arthritis, DAS28-CRP, anxiety, depression, HADS

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence comes from the Latin word *adolescere*, which means growing toward maturity. Adolescents in the transition stage between childhood and adulthood experience various physical, emotional, and social changes that can affect their mental health (WHO, 2021). Good mental health among young people is very important because it can influence their future development. With the increasing use of technology and the internet, various new phenomena have emerged that affect adolescents' mental health, one of which is online game addiction.

Online games are games that operate using an internet connection. They are generally video games that can only be played online. Online games are accessed through hardware such as mobile smartphones (Android), PlayStation (PS), Xbox, and computers (PC). Online games are divided into several types or genres, such as role-playing games (RPGs) and many others. Online games can have both positive and negative impacts. The positive impacts include improving skills, encouraging decision-making and problem-solving abilities, enhancing quick thinking, and maintaining social interactions. However, negative impacts occur when a person becomes excessively immersed in playing online games, leading to addiction, wastefulness, health issues, and psychological problems such as aggressive behavior. Teenagers who are addicted to online games tend to lose interest in other activities and feel anxious when they cannot play (Novrialdy, 2019a). Distinguishing game addiction from normal gaming behavior

involves recognizing healthy and unhealthy behavioral patterns in relation to gaming activities (Yulianti Putri et al., 2023).

Online gaming addiction is a form of addictive behavior that is becoming increasingly widespread among teenagers. Based on research by Gentile et al. (2011), this addiction is characterized by excessive gaming that disrupts daily activities, where individuals prefer playing games to engaging in social life. In this context, adolescents' social interactions are disrupted, and social influence can be one of the factors that trigger addiction. Adolescents often seek acceptance and recognition from online communities, encouraging them to spend more time playing games (Kuss & Griffiths, 2012). Moreover, online gaming addiction can cause various mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety, and social isolation. This phenomenon needs to be studied further, especially among adolescents who are more vulnerable to these disorders.

According to a report by Vika Azkiya Dihni (January 2022) through We Are Social, the Philippines ranks first in the world with 96.4% of internet users playing video games, or 964,000,000 people. Indonesia ranks third with 94.5% of internet users, or 263,420,981 people. In Indonesia, the phenomenon of mental health issues among adolescents related to online game addiction is becoming a growing concern. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (2020) shows that the number of internet users in Indonesia continues to increase, with nearly 80% being adolescents. Based on a preliminary study conducted by researchers at SMPN 2 Dolopo, 2 out of 7 students experience anxiety when unable to play online games and realize difficulty in controlling their emotions. This condition poses a challenge for parents and educators in maintaining adolescents' mental health.

The rise of online gaming among teenagers can be attributed to the era of globalization and social media expansion. Many new applications tempt teenagers to try them, and one contributing factor is the lack of parental or familial supervision, leading to addiction and excessive time spent playing games. Consequently, adolescents addicted to online games tend to be less interested in other activities and feel anxious when they cannot play (Novrialdy, 2019b). Problems arising from excessive gaming include reduced enthusiasm for social activities, loss of control over time, a decline in academic performance, and negative impacts on social relationships, finances, health, and other essential aspects of life. Excessive use of time for online gaming disrupts daily functioning and significantly shifts teenagers' priorities, resulting in low interest in non-gaming activities.

A possible solution to address mental health issues among adolescents suffering from online gaming addiction is through counseling services with trained school counselors. Schools can intervene by promoting positive behavior as a preventive measure against gaming addiction. School-aged adolescents can gain valuable knowledge and understanding through education. Furthermore, support from their social environment is also necessary for the effectiveness of these interventions. Schools can also enforce smartphone usage limitations and collaborate with parents. However, these programs are not yet optimal due to the lack of comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing online gaming addiction and its impact on adolescents' mental health.

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between online gaming addiction and adolescent mental health, but most emphasize either behavioral or psychological factors without integrating both comprehensively. Kuss and Griffiths (2012) conducted an extensive study on Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD) and found that addiction is closely linked to social reinforcement, escapism, and brain reward system activation. However, their research primarily focused on Western contexts, where cultural and familial dynamics differ significantly from those in Indonesia. Meanwhile, Gentile et al. (2011) identified that adolescents who play more than 30 hours a week are more likely to experience depression and anxiety symptoms. Although this study successfully established a correlation between gaming

duration and mental health, it did not account for contextual factors such as family supervision, school engagement, and peer influence, which vary across societies.

This study was motivated by the phenomenon of mental health issues among adolescents addicted to online games at SMPN 2 Dolopo, Dolopo District, Madiun Regency. The main issue addressed is how mental health manifests among adolescents addicted to online games in this area. The general objective of this study is to identify the mental health phenomenon among adolescents addicted to online games, while the specific objectives include analyzing stress levels, identifying addiction-causing factors, and evaluating social interaction disorders resulting from excessive gaming. This study is expected to provide theoretical benefits as a source of scientific information about the impact of online game addiction on adolescent mental health. Practically, the results can contribute to STIKES Bhakti Husada Mulia Madiun as a reference in the learning process, serve as awareness material for adolescents to avoid addiction, offer additional references for future researchers, and inform parents about the impact of online game addiction on their children's mental health.

METHOD

The type of research used in this study was a qualitative research design. A qualitative approach was chosen because the study was conducted under natural conditions, allowing the researcher to explore the focus of the problem in depth. This approach aimed to understand phenomena such as perceptions, motivations, and actions holistically within a specific context using various scientific methods.

The data used in this study were qualitative in nature, consisting of verbal and written expressions observed by the researcher to explore the background, events, and interactions within a specific social environment. The phenomenological method was employed to explain experiences and their meanings to individuals through interviews with several informants. This method aimed to reveal shared meanings that form the essence of a phenomenon consciously experienced by a group of individuals in their daily lives.

Data were collected through interviews and observations of informants who had experienced mental health disorders due to online gaming addiction. The researchers conducted in-depth interviews and observations, adjusting techniques to each informant's condition. The interview results were coded, reviewed, and interpreted using relevant theoretical frameworks, then analyzed and described based on supporting theories.

The subjects of this study were students of SMPN 2 Dolopo, Madiun Regency, who were addicted to online games. They were selected because they could provide the necessary data to answer the research questions. The participants were determined using purposive sampling, a technique that selects subjects based on specific criteria relevant to the study's focus. The criteria included students who played online games for more than two hours per day, were aged between 12 and 14 years, showed symptoms of online game addiction, were enrolled at SMPN 2 Dolopo, and were willing to participate in interviews. Purposive sampling was used because it allowed the selection of informants considered most knowledgeable and experienced regarding the research problem, facilitating deeper insights into adolescent mental health issues related to online gaming addiction. This approach aligned with Sugiyono (2019) view that purposive sampling is appropriate when researchers require informants who best understand the research context.

Data were gathered through three primary methods: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was carried out to directly observe adolescents' gaming habits and their social interactions with peers at SMPN 2 Dolopo, Madiun Regency. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected informants to obtain detailed information about mental health conditions and related factors. Documentation, including photos, notes,

transcripts, and audio recordings, was used to support the validity and reliability of findings from observations and interviews.

Data analysis followed Miles & Huberman (1994) interactive model, which consisted of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. During data reduction, interview recordings were transcribed, coded, and grouped into themes such as behavioral changes, emotional responses, and social interaction issues associated with online gaming addiction, while irrelevant data were excluded to maintain analytical focus. In the data display stage, the organized data were presented descriptively and supported by participant quotations to illustrate essential experiences. Matrices and conceptual diagrams were used to demonstrate relationships among factors influencing mental health. In the final stage, conclusion drawing and verification, conclusions were developed from emerging patterns and compared with theoretical frameworks on adolescent psychology and addictive behavior. Triangulation was conducted through cross-verification of data from interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure validity and reliability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of SMPN 2 Dolopo

SMP Negeri 2 Dolopo, located at Jalan Abimanyu No. 79, Dolopo Village, Dolopo District, Madiun Regency, East Java, is a junior high school under the auspices of the local government. SMP Negeri 2 Dolopo has a land area of 3,955 square meters and is equipped with internet facilities and electricity from PLN. The school implements a morning learning system 6 days a week.

SMP NEGERI 2 DOLOPO is one of the public junior high schools located in the Dolopo District, Madiun Regency, East Java. SMP NEGERI 2 DOLOPO was established on February 17, 1978, with Establishment Decree Number 030/U/79 under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture. In its educational activities, this school, which has 247 students, is guided by 27 professional teachers in their respective fields. The current principal of SMP NEGERI 2 DOLOPO is Suharto.

Characteristics of Research Subjects

The subjects of this study were eight adolescents who played online games in the area of SMPN 2 Dolopo. Based on the study, the characteristics of the respondents are described as follows:

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Subjects

No	Response Code	Age	Gender
1.	Response 1	14 th	Male
2.	Response 2	15 th	Male
3.	Response 3	14 th	Male
4.	Response 4	14 th	Male
5.	Response 5	16 th	Male
6.	Response 6	14 th	Male
7.	Response 7	15 th	Female
8.	Response 8	14 th	Male

Primary data sources 2025

The female respondents numbered 1 child, while the other 7 respondents were male. The youngest respondents in this study were 14 years old, numbering 5 children.

Interpretation of Research Results

Interviews were conducted with research subjects regarding stress levels due to changes in appearance, anxiety, social interaction disorders, and duration of gaming. The results of the interviews showed that most children who play online games spend more than two hours per day gaming and feel anxious when they do not play games. This can be seen from the statements of teenagers who are addicted to online games regarding their mental health:

Stressful conditions

Stress is a common problem in human life. Stress is a dynamic condition in which individuals face opportunities, obstacles, and responsibilities related to a burden.

The results of the study show that most respondents have difficulty controlling their emotions when playing online games. Of the eight respondents, six clearly admitted that they were unable to control themselves when faced with situations that did not meet their expectations while playing. The forms of emotional outbursts that emerged were very diverse, ranging from destructive physical actions such as smashing smartphones until they were damaged (Respondents 1, 3, and 6), verbal outbursts in the form of harsh words (Respondent 4), and social outbursts in the form of yelling at or even scolding their friends while playing (Respondents 2 and 5). Other respondents said that they often felt uncomfortable, angry, and even scolded their friends when they felt disturbed while playing (Respondents 7 and 8). This phenomenon shows that intense involvement in online games has the potential to cause emotional stress that is difficult for adolescents to control.

Thus, the phenomenon of stress in adolescents addicted to online games can be understood as a combination of several factors:

1. Internal factors, such as emotional immaturity and weak self-regulation skills.
2. External factors, such as social pressure, competition in games, and technical disturbances.
3. Family environment factors, where a lack of control and communication from parents causes teenagers to seek emotional release through online games.

If left unaddressed, this condition has the potential to cause wider impacts, such as increased aggressive behavior, disrupted social relationships, decreased academic performance, and the risk of long-term psychological disorders. Therefore, intervention needs to be directed at digital literacy education, strengthening self-regulation, and active parental involvement in guiding children so that online gaming does not become a source of stress that is detrimental to adolescent development.

Anxiety

Anxiety is a feeling of nervousness or uneasiness. People usually experience anxiety when faced with certain situations. Anxiety is the body's natural reaction to stress.

Anxiety is a psychological response that arises as a natural reaction to stress. According to Nevid, Rathus, & Greene (2018), anxiety is characterized by feelings of nervousness, restlessness, worry, or fear about something that may happen, whether real or imagined. In the

context of teenagers who play online games, anxiety can arise when they face the possibility of losing achievements in the game, pressure from their social environment, or disturbances in their daily lives that drive them to use games as an escape.

Based on the results of the study, of the eight respondents interviewed, only two clearly admitted to experiencing anxiety due to their involvement in online gaming. Respondent 1 stated that he felt anxious when not playing games, because he was worried that his rank in the game would decrease. This statement indicates performance anxiety, where individuals fear losing their achievements, thus feeling compelled to continue playing. This condition illustrates the phenomenon of fear of missing out (FOMO), which often occurs among digital media users, including online gamers.

Anxiety was also demonstrated by Respondent 5, albeit in a different form. He admitted to playing games when faced with pressure from schoolwork. For him, gaming was a means of relieving academic stress, even though it indirectly delayed the completion of his actual tasks. This phenomenon is in line with the concept of coping avoidance, which is the tendency of individuals to avoid real problems by seeking distracting activities. However, this strategy does not solve the root of the problem; instead, it risks adding to the psychological burden in the future.

Meanwhile, Respondent 7 revealed that playing online games can eliminate the loneliness he experiences. This shows the function of games as an emotional compensation tool, namely a way to cover up social emptiness by creating bonds in the virtual world. According to Kuss & Griffiths (2017), many adolescents use online games to fulfill psychosocial needs, such as the need for affiliation, togetherness, or acceptance from peer groups. Although this can be soothing in the short term, in the long term it can reinforce dependence and increase the risk of social anxiety.

Unlike these three respondents, the majority of other respondents (Respondents 2, 3, 4, 6, and 8) stated that they did not experience anxiety even though they did not play games. Respondents 4 and 3 even emphasized that they felt neutral, undisturbed, and did not lose enthusiasm even though they did not play. Meanwhile, Respondent 2 admitted that they were aware that anxiety was one of the characteristics of addiction, so they tried to avoid it. Respondents 6 and 8 also said the same thing, that they still felt normal without playing games. These statements show that there are variations in the level of dependence among adolescents, where some are able to regulate their involvement, while others are more vulnerable to psychological symptoms.

Thus, it can be concluded that the phenomenon of anxiety among adolescents addicted to online games is more prevalent among those who use games as the center of their social identity or as an escape from the pressures of real life. Anxiety arises due to emotional dependence on the game, whether to maintain status (rank), avoid responsibilities, or fill social voids. However, variations in experiences among respondents also confirm that individual and environmental factors greatly determine whether involvement in online gaming develops into pathological anxiety or not.

Social Interaction Disorders

Social interaction disorders associated with impulsivity are evidenced by feeling uncomfortable in social situations, finding it difficult to accept or communicate feelings, being unresponsive or uninterested in others, and having no interest in emotional or physical contact.

Social interaction disorder is a condition in which individuals experience difficulty in establishing or maintaining healthy social relationships. According to Kaplan & Sadock (2015), this disorder is often associated with impulsive behavior, discomfort in social situations, poor communication skills, lack of responsiveness to others, and minimal interest in emotional or physical contact. In the context of adolescents addicted to online gaming, social interaction disorders can arise because most of their emotional energy and time is devoted to the virtual world, thereby reducing the quality of their real social relationships.

The phenomenon found in this study is in line with the findings of Kuss & Griffiths (2012), which state that online games can have a dual impact on social interaction. On the one hand, games can strengthen bonds with peers who share similar interests (bonding social capital). However, on the other hand, excessive attachment to games can reduce the quality of face-to-face communication, create a sense of dependence on certain groups, and limit social skills outside the gamer community.

In conclusion, the phenomenon of social interaction disorders in teenagers addicted to online games does not necessarily mean a loss of social skills. However, excessive attachment to games causes social interactions to tend to be superficial, instrumental, and lacking in emotional closeness. If left unchecked, this condition has the potential to reduce the quality of social skills, increase the risk of isolation, and foster dependence on virtual communities rather than real social relationships. Therefore, parents, schools, and the social environment need to play a role in guiding adolescents to use games as entertainment in a more balanced way without sacrificing the quality of their social interactions.

Discussion

Online gaming has become a very popular activity among teenagers. In addition to being a form of entertainment, this activity is also seen as a space for competition and a medium for social interaction. However, the high intensity of gaming brings psychological consequences that cannot be ignored. Adolescence itself is a period characterized by identity search, emotional instability, and a high need for social recognition, making them more vulnerable to pressure from the digital world. In this context, online gaming can provide positive experiences, but it can also be a source of various psychological and social problems.

The results of the study show that the impact of adolescent involvement in online gaming is most prominent in three main phenomena, namely the emergence of emotional stress, the development of anxiety, and a shift in the quality of social interaction. These three aspects are interrelated and form a distinctive pattern, in which competitive pressure in games triggers stress, some adolescents then develop anxiety when digital performance is considered part of their self-esteem, while their social interactions shift from face-to-face communication to more superficial screen-based interactions. To provide a more comprehensive picture, the following discussion will describe these three phenomena in sequence.

Stress Conditions in Teenagers Addicted to Online Gaming

The results of the study show that most respondents have difficulty controlling their emotions when faced with situations that do not meet their expectations while playing online games. The forms of stress they express vary greatly. Some respondents tended to vent their anger through destructive physical actions, such as smashing their smartphones until they were damaged. Other respondents expressed their emotions by using harsh words, while some respondents scolded or even yelled at their friends who they considered to be disrupting the game. There were also respondents who admitted to often feeling annoyed and angry when their friends did things that disrupted their concentration while playing, to the point of reprimanding them harshly. This phenomenon shows that online gaming is not only a means of entertainment, but also triggers emotional stress that is difficult to control.

Psychologically, this condition can be explained through the concept of stress as an interaction between individuals and their environment (Sentani et al., 2021). When teenagers face pressure from games, such as losing a match, dropping in rank, or technical obstacles in the form of poor internet connection, they interpret these situations as threats to their self-esteem, social prestige, and even their identity within the gaming community. As a result, the emotional responses that arise are disproportionate, such as throwing their cell phones or cursing at friends. This is in line with the theory of Hewitt, Flett, & Mosher (1992), which divides stress into two dimensions, namely perceived control and perceived stress. The majority of respondents showed signs of perceived stress, namely negative reactions such as anger, frustration, and loss of control, while the ability to perceive control to cope with pressure in a healthy manner was still very low.

Psychologically, stress is understood as the interaction between an individual and their environment that is perceived as overwhelming or exceeding their capacity to adapt (Alhurani et al., 2018; Lazarus & Folkman, 2021). In this context, online games present a series of unique stressors, such as defeat, a drop in rank, or technical disruptions such as poor internet connection. These stressors are perceived by adolescents as threats to their self-esteem, social prestige, and even their identity within the gaming community, triggering intense and often disproportionate emotional reactions.

This phenomenon is consistent with the theory of perceived stress (Hewitt F. et al., 1992), in which the majority of respondents emphasize perceived stress rather than perceived control. In other words, adolescents tend to view gaming situations as threats that are difficult to control, so that the emotional responses that arise are more often in the form of angry outbursts than adaptive strategies.

Adolescence itself is a period of development characterized by identity exploration and weak emotional control. From a neuropsychological perspective, the brain structures involved in emotional regulation, such as the prefrontal cortex, are not yet fully mature (Counted, 2016; Feixa Pàmpols, 2020; Schachter & Galliher, 2018). This makes adolescents prone to impulsivity, reactivity, and maladaptive coping. These findings are also in line with the research by Aditya Gunawan & Bintari (2021), which confirms that excessive involvement in online gaming increases the risk of emotional stress, aggression, and social conflict. Adolescence itself is a period of development characterized by identity search and weak emotional control (Erikson, 1968). From a neuropsychological perspective, the brain structures involved in emotional

regulation, such as the prefrontal cortex, are not yet fully mature. This makes adolescents prone to impulsivity, reactivity, and maladaptive coping. These findings are also in line with the research by Aditya Gunawan & Bintari (2021), which confirms that excessive involvement in online gaming increases the risk of emotional stress, aggression, and social conflict.

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The phenomenon of stress among teenagers addicted to online games cannot be separated from their psychological development stage. According to Erikson (1968), adolescence is a phase of identity search, where individuals are still learning to manage their emotions and adjust to social demands. When they spend a lot of time in the virtual world, the emotional regulation that should be formed through real social interaction is replaced by digital interaction patterns that tend to be competitive, stressful, and full of demands for victory. As a result, adolescents are more prone to experiencing explosive emotions when faced with failure or obstacles in games.

The findings of this study are in line with the results of research by Aditya Gunawan & Bintari (2021), which explains that adolescents who play online games too often are prone to stress and emotional disorders, both due to internal factors (the desire to maintain game performance, fear of dropping in rank) and external factors (pressure from peers, ridicule, or technical disturbances). The same was also found by Putra & Handayani (2020), who stated that game-addicted adolescents tend to show symptoms of aggression and negative emotions when they experience defeat or are hindered in the game.

In addition, the phenomenon of stress manifested by throwing a cell phone or using foul language can be seen as a form of maladaptive coping. According to Lazarus & Folkman (2021), coping is an individual's strategy for dealing with stress. If coping is adaptive, individuals will seek constructive solutions, such as resting, finding other entertainment, or discussing with friends. However, maladaptive coping leads to destructive behaviors such as physical aggression, excessive anger, or withdrawal. The data from this study shows that most respondents more often use maladaptive coping when facing pressure in online games.

The coping mechanisms demonstrated by respondents were mostly maladaptive, namely verbal and physical aggression. However, adaptive coping strategies such as problem-focused coping (e.g., seeking new game strategies) or emotion-focused coping (e.g., taking a break, relaxation techniques) have been shown to be more constructive in the long term (Lazarus & Folkman, 2021). In other words, stress caused by online gaming in adolescents is more influenced by limitations in self-regulation than by the game itself.

Anxiety in Teenage Online Gamers

Unlike the phenomenon of stress, anxiety was found in a small number of respondents. Respondents said that they felt anxious when they did not play games, because they were worried that their rank or level would drop. This condition indicates performance anxiety, where individuals associate their self-esteem with digital achievements in games. This phenomenon is closely related to fear of missing out (FOMO), which is the fear of being left behind in terms of certain achievements or opportunities in the digital environment (Przybylski et al., 2013).

Another respondent experienced anxiety in a different form. He used gaming as an escape from academic pressure. When faced with a pile of school assignments, he preferred to play games rather than complete his academic obligations. This illustrates avoidance coping, which is a strategy of avoiding real problems by seeking distracting activities. This strategy can indeed relieve short-term anxiety, but in the long run it worsens the condition because the source of the problem remains unresolved.

Other respondents highlighted the emotional compensation aspect: they play games to reduce feelings of loneliness. Online games provide virtual interactions that give the illusion of togetherness, even if it is superficial. This is in line with the findings of Kuss & Griffiths (2017) that many adolescents use games to fulfill their need for affiliation and social acceptance.

Conversely, the majority of other respondents stated that they did not experience anxiety even though they did not play. Respondent 2 even stated that he was aware that anxiety was a sign of addiction, so he avoided it. Respondents 3, 4, 6, and 8 admitted that they remained calm even though they did not play. This variation confirms that not all online gamers are synonymous with anxiety or addiction; factors such as self-control, social support, and goal orientation greatly moderate their psychological experiences.

Theoretically, these findings can be linked to behavioral addiction theory. In this theory, anxiety arises because individuals develop a strong emotional attachment to certain activities, in this case online gaming. When these activities cease, individuals experience withdrawal symptoms such as anxiety, restlessness, or discomfort. However, respondents who did not experience anxiety indicate that not all online game users automatically become addicted; personal factors, self-control, and social environment greatly influence their vulnerability.

This study is in line with King & Delfabbro's (2019) study, which found that anxiety in online gamers arises mainly in those who are involved in competitive games, have the goal of maintaining their ranking, or use gaming as a primary means of avoiding real-life problems. Meanwhile, gamers who have better self-control tend not to show symptoms of anxiety even when playing for long periods of time.

According to Nevid, Rathus, & Greene (2018), anxiety is the body's natural response to stress, but it can develop into a disorder when it becomes excessive. Within the framework of behavioral addiction theory, anxiety can be understood as a withdrawal symptom when individuals cannot access activities that have become the center of their attachment. King & Delfabbro (2019) also emphasize that anxiety is more common among competitive gamers or those who use gaming as their primary means of escape from the pressures of real life.

Thus, the phenomenon of anxiety among teenage online gamers is mainly experienced by those who link their identity to their gaming performance or use gaming as a mechanism of escape.

Social Interaction Disorders in Teenage Online Gamers

Social interaction is an important aspect of adolescent development, but research shows that there are variations in interaction patterns influenced by involvement in online games.

Respondents showed adaptive patterns, namely by reducing the time spent playing games and preferring to interact directly with people around them. This illustrates an awareness of the importance of real social contact as a means of reducing dependence on the digital world.

In contrast, other respondents showed a mixed pattern, namely hanging out while playing games (for example, playing games at a food stall). Although there was physical togetherness, the quality of the interaction tended to be superficial because the main focus remained on the game. This phenomenon is in line with the concept of alone together, where physical presence does not guarantee emotional closeness because attention is diverted to the screen (Acharya, 2015; Arnd-Caddigan, 2015; Campbell, 2021; Mousa, 2021).

Some respondents also displayed compensatory patterns. Respondents often went out at night to play games, especially during school holidays, so that time with friends was more tied to digital activities. In contrast, other respondents actually reduced their gaming when they were with their friends, which indicates better self-regulation skills.

The phenomenon found in this study is in line with the findings of Kuss & Griffiths (2012), which state that online games can have a dual impact on social interaction. On the one hand, games can strengthen bonds with peers who share similar interests (bonding social capital). However, on the other hand, excessive attachment to games can reduce the quality of face-to-face communication, create a sense of dependence on certain groups, and limit social skills outside the gamer community.

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Thus, impaired social interaction among adolescents addicted to online games does not necessarily mean a total inability to socialize, but rather a shift in the quality of interaction: from deep emotional communication to instrumental interaction centered on digital activities.

When these three domains are viewed holistically, it becomes apparent that stress, anxiety, and social interaction are interrelated. Stress arises from competitive pressure and technical obstacles in gaming. Limited self-regulation causes this stress to be vented in maladaptive ways. A small percentage of adolescents then develop anxiety, especially when their achievements in the game are considered part of their self-esteem or when the game is used as an escape from loneliness or academic pressures. At the same time, their social

interactions shift from deep face-to-face communication to superficial, screen-centered interactions.

Thus, it can be understood that intense involvement in online gaming among adolescents not only affects their emotional aspects, but also their self-identity, social relationships, and psychological well-being.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that teenagers at SMPN 2 Dolopo who were addicted to online games tended to struggle with emotional regulation, especially when situations in the game did not meet their expectations. This addiction was influenced by external factors such as peer pressure and popular gaming trends, which affected social interactions by simultaneously fostering connections among peers with similar interests and weakening face-to-face communication and broader social skills. The findings highlight the need for greater awareness among adolescents about the mental health impacts of excessive gaming and provide valuable input for STIKES Bhakti Husada Mulia Madiun to promote interventions aimed at reducing gaming dependency. Future research should explore adolescent mental health and gaming addiction using a larger sample size and a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to obtain more comprehensive insights.

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