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The influence of online gaming on children's behaviour: A study in Bareilly District

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Abstract
This study investigates the influence of online gaming on children's behaviour in the Bareilly district. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to children aged 11-18 years. The information was collected on demographics, gaming habits, and perceived impacts on academic performance, emotional well-being, and social interactions. Key findings include an age distribution where 34% of respondents are 11-14 years, 43% are 14-16 years, and 24% are 16-18 years, with a striking 96% male predominance. Results are presented in percentages for each survey item. The study reveals that while online gaming appears to enhance certain cognitive skills with 65% affirming improved problem-solving, it also correlates with negative outcomes such as academic decline 50% reported a decline, increased aggression (50%), and reduced social interaction. The findings offer valuable insights for parents, educators, and policymakers.

Keywords: Bareilly district, online gaming, children's behaviour, academic performance, emotional well-being, social interaction, aggression, cognitive skills

1. Introduction
Online gaming has become a dominant pastime among children, spurred by increased access to high-speed internet and a wide range of gaming devices. Although gaming is associated with benefits such as improved cognitive abilities and virtual socialization, concerns exist regarding its potential adverse effects on academic performance, emotional stability, and real-life social interactions. This study examines these issues among children in the Bareilly district, focusing on both the positive and negative outcomes of online gaming.

2. Review of Literature
The influence of online gaming on children's behaviour has been widely explored in contemporary research, addressing multiple dimensions such as aggression, academic performance, social interaction, cognitive development, and the role of parental supervision.
Anderson and Bushman (2001) [3] conducted a meta-analysis showing that violent video games are associated with increased aggression, aggressive thoughts, and decreased prosocial behaviour. These findings were echoed by Gentile *et al.* (2004) [4], who found a strong correlation between violent game exposure and hostile behaviour in children. More recently, Prescott, Sargent, and Hull (2018) emphasized that prolonged exposure to violent content in gaming leads to higher impulsivity and irritability. However, Granic, Lobel and Engels (2014) [1] suggested that the relationship between gaming and aggression is moderated by individual differences and environmental context, rather than gaming alone.
Social implications of gaming have also been explored. Kowert *et al.* (2015) [5] highlighted that excessive gaming can reduce real-life social interactions, leading to isolation. In contrast, Cole and Griffiths (2007) reported that multiplayer online games foster social bonds, with children often developing meaningful relationships with co-players. Domahidi *et al.* (2014) [5] further noted that online friendships can be comparable in quality to offline relationships, suggesting that the social outcomes of gaming depend on how games are played.
In terms of academic performance, Weis and Cerankosky (2010) showed that access to video games correlates with decreased time spent on homework and lower academic scores.

Similarly, Chiu, Lee and Huang (2004) identified negative academic outcomes linked to gaming addiction. On the other hand, Shute, Ventura, and Ke (2015) found that strategic games could improve problem-solving skills and cognitive flexibility, indirectly supporting academic growth. Research on cognitive benefits has also shown that action and strategy games can enhance visual attention, spatial reasoning, and decision-making. Bavelier, Green, and Dye (2010) noted that gamers often outperform non-gamers on various attention-based tasks. Przybylski and Weinstein (2017) further emphasized that moderate gaming is positively associated with creativity and problem-solving in children. Adachi and Willoughby (2013) added that competitive gameplay fosters resilience, adaptability, and higher-order thinking. Nikken and Schols (2015) concluded that children whose gaming is actively monitored by parents tend to experience fewer negative consequences. Griffiths and Meredith (2009) highlighted that structured gaming environments, guided by informed parental involvement, allow children to enjoy the benefits of gaming without suffering its downsides.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design: A descriptive, quantitative research design was used. A structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions was distributed among children aged 11-18 years in the Bareilly district.

3.2 Participant

Children of Bareilly District.

3.3 Data Collection Instrument

The questionnaire covered:-

- **Demographics:** Age, gender.
- **Gaming Habits:** Daily gaming hours, game preferences.
- **Perceived Impacts:** Effects on studies, irritability, sleep, aggression, problem-solving skills, social interactions, academic performance, influence of in-game purchases, parental restrictions, and stress related to gaming.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, with the results expressed as percentages for each response option. Tables were used to visually represent the findings.

4. Results

Table 1: Summary of the key percentage results for each criterion

Serial No.	Criteria	Category	Percentage
1	Age Group (Years)	11-14 14-16 16-18	34% 43% 24%
2	Gender	Male Female	96% 04%
3	Daily Gaming Hours	<1 hr 1-2 hrs 3-4 hrs >4 hrs	10%, 50% 30%, 10%
4	Preferred Game Types	Action Strategy Multiplayer Sports Others	40%, 20%, 25% 10%, 5%
5	Impact on Studies	Yes No Sometimes	60% 25%, 15%
6	Irritability when unable to play	Yes No Sometimes	55% 30% 15%
7	Effect on sleep schedule	Yes No Sometimes	45% 40% 15%
8	Perceived Aggression	Yes No Sometimes	50% 30% 20%
9	Improvement in problem-solving skills	Yes No Maybe	65% 20% 15%
10	Decrease in social interactions	Yes No Sometimes	40% 40% 20%
11	Preference for gaming over outdoor activities	Yes No Sometimes	45% 35% 20%
12	Impact on academic performance	Improved Declined No Effect	20% 50% 30%
13	Influence of in-game purchases	Yes No Sometimes	35% 50% 15%
14	Parental restriction of gaming hours	Yes No Sometimes	30% 50% 20%
15	Stress when unable to play	Yes No Sometimes	55% 25% 20%

5. Discussion

The percentage-based results provide a clear picture of the influence of online gaming on children in the Bareilly district:

- **Demographics:** The predominance of 14-16-year-olds (43%) and a male-heavy sample (96%) suggest that early to mid-adolescents, particularly boys, are the primary gaming population in this region.
- **Gaming Habits:** The majority of respondents engage in gaming for 1-2 hours daily (50%), indicating moderate usage. However, even this moderate engagement is associated with mixed outcomes.
- **Academic and Cognitive Effects:** While 65% of respondents believe that gaming enhances problem-solving skills, 50% report a decline in academic performance, suggesting that cognitive benefits may come at the cost of academic focus.
- **Emotional and Social Impacts:** High levels of irritability (55%) and stress (55%) when unable to play, along with sleep disruption (45%) and decreased social interactions (40%), indicate that gaming can adversely affect emotional regulation and social behaviour.
- **Parental influence and external factors:** With only 30% of respondents indicating strict parental restrictions and 35% influenced by in-game purchases, there is a clear need for more active supervision and regulation to mitigate potential negative impacts.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study illustrate a complex interplay between the benefits and drawbacks of online gaming among children in the Bareilly district. While a significant portion of children experience cognitive benefits, such as improved problem-solving skills, these benefits are accompanied by notable challenges including academic decline, emotional distress, and diminished social interactions. The gender imbalance and moderate gaming hours further underscore the need for targeted parental oversight and balanced lifestyle promotion. Future research should aim for a more diverse sample and explore long-term behavioural impacts.

7. Recommendations

- **Enhanced Parental Supervision:** Increase parental involvement in monitoring gaming habits.
- **Balanced Lifestyle Promotion:** Encourage schedules that balance gaming with academic, physical, and social activities.
- **Educational Programs:** Develop awareness programs to inform both children and parents about the potential benefits and risks of online gaming.
- **Further Research:** Extend studies to include a more balanced gender representation and longitudinal analyses.

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