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Research Article

Relationship Between Online Gaming and Aggression Among Youth - A Review

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Abstract

The main objective of this review paper is to understand the relationship between online gaming and aggression on the basis of a review of current studies. Research papers conducted between 2015 and 2026 have been reviewed. After carefully reading and analysing all the research papers, it has been found that there is a positive correlation between online gaming and aggression. This review suggests that future empirical studies should be conducted to understand the relationship between online gaming and aggression from different perspectives and to raise awareness among the youth population and they should be helped through various intervention techniques.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Today is the era of internet, Online gaming and social media have established their dominance in the world. While online gaming has positive effects, on the other hand, negative effects are also seen. Today's teenagers accept online gaming as a part of their lives. Recent studies have shown that excessive use of online gaming increases aggression, aggression has a direct impact on adolescent's academic performance, self-esteem, happiness, concentration, and relationships. People who play online games together sometimes promote aggression through peer pressure. Main purpose of writing this review paper is to understand by reading different research papers that what is the data of aggression, online gaming addiction in the youth population. To write this review paper, literature from different journals, research papers have been collected. (Grand View Research. 2026)ⁱ.

New data from the WHO Regional Office for Europe reveals a sharp rise in problematic social media use among adolescents, with rates increasing from 7% in 2018 to 11% in 2022. This, coupled with findings that 12% of adolescents are at risk of problematic gaming, raises urgent concerns about the impact of digital technology on the mental health and well-being of young people. These findings come from the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study, which surveyed almost 280000 young people aged 11, 13 and 15 across 44 countries and regions in Europe, central Asia and Canada in 2022.

Addiction to gaming is described in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5-TR), which is used by mental health professionals to diagnose mental disorders. In the DSM-5-TR, the condition is referred to as Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD) (1). IGD is included in the section recommending conditions for further research, along with caffeine use disorder and other conditions.

The primary shooting video game that has been widely criticized and legally scrutinized for promoting aggression, behavioral addiction, and violent tendencies among Indian youth is Player Unknown's Battlegrounds (PUBG) Mobile (and its subsequent India-specific avatar, Battlegrounds Mobile India / BGMI), along with similar titles like Free Fire. [1, 2, 3]

2. KEY CASE HISTORY IN INDIA

The societal backlash against violent shooting games in India is documented through several high-profile legal actions and criminal investigations:

- The Lucknow Matricide (2022): In a case that shocked the country, a 16-year-old boy in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, shot his mother dead using his father's licensed pistol. The police investigation revealed that "a 16-year-old boy in Lucknow shot his mother dead for stopping him from playing PUBG."
- The Belagavi Patricide (2019): In Belagavi, Karnataka, a 21-year-old youth named Raghuvir Kumbhar brutally attacked and murdered his father, a retired police department staff member. The father had repeatedly scolded him for his severe addiction to PUBG and cut off

his mobile internet connection; in a fit of rage, the youth decapitated his father and severed his leg.

- The Rajkot Police Bans and Arrests (2019): In March 2019, the police commissioner of Rajkot, Gujarat, issued an official notification banning PUBG Mobile within city limits. The notification stated, "From the various sources, it comes to our knowledge that after playing games like [PUBG,] violent traits are shown to be increased in youth and children."
- Government Interventions: In 2020, the Indian government initially banned PUBG Mobile under Section 69A of the IT Act, citing national security concerns amid geopolitical tensions. However, union ministers and child rights bodies like the NCPCR have repeatedly flagged these games for being addictive and creating behavioral issues. Government officials explicitly labeled it an example of a game that is "violent, explicit, addictive, and tend to create a complex in the mind of children" -- [India Today]. [2, 11, 12]

The positive effects of online gaming include cognitive enhancement, stress relief, and social connection.

The negative effects of online gaming include internet gaming disorder, isolation and emotional and behavioral issues.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To review existing literature on online gaming and aggression among youth, and to identify key factors contributing to aggressive behaviour.

4. ONLINE GAMING: CONCEPT AND GROWTH

Online gaming refers to playing digital games through the internet, enabling players to interact, cooperate, or compete with others in real time. It includes various genres such as action, adventure, strategy, sports, and multiplayer online games. Online gaming can be accessed through computers, gaming consoles, and smartphones, making it one of the most accessible forms of digital entertainment (Griffiths et al., 2017)ⁱⁱ.

The growth of online gaming has been remarkable over the past two decades. Advances in internet technology, widespread smartphone usage, and affordable data services have significantly increased the number of gamers worldwide. Multiplayer games and e-sports competitions have further enhanced the popularity of online gaming, especially among adolescents and young adults. Online gaming is not only a source of entertainment but also a platform for social interaction and skill development. However, its rapid expansion has raised concerns regarding excessive gaming, addiction, and behavioral outcomes such as aggression and reduced psychological well-being (Kuss & Griffiths, 2012)ⁱⁱⁱ. Consequently, researchers have shown increasing interest in examining both the positive and negative effects of online gaming on youth.

5. UNDERSTANDING AGGRESSION

Aggression is generally defined as any behavior intended to harm, injure, or cause discomfort to another person who is motivated to avoid such treatment. It is a complex psychological and social phenomenon that can be expressed in various forms, including physical aggression (hitting or fighting), verbal aggression (insulting or threatening), and relational aggression (damaging social relationships). Aggressive behavior may arise from biological, psychological, environmental, and social factors (Anderson & Bushman, 2002)^{iv}.

Several theories have been proposed to explain aggression. The Frustration–Aggression Theory suggests that aggression often results from frustration caused by blocked goals or unmet expectations (Dollard et al., 1939)^v. The Social Learning Theory argues that individuals learn aggressive behaviors by observing and imitating others, particularly when such behaviors are rewarded (Bandura, 1977). Similarly, the General Aggression Model (GAM) explains aggression as the outcome of interactions among personal characteristics, situational factors, thoughts, emotions, and arousal levels (Anderson & Bushman, 2002)^{vi}.

Understanding aggression is important because it influences interpersonal relationships, social adjustment, and mental well-being. In the context of online gaming, researchers have increasingly examined whether exposure to competitive or violent game content contributes to aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors among players.

6. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on the relationship between online gaming and aggression has produced mixed findings; however, many studies report a positive association, particularly when gaming becomes excessive or develops into Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD). Aggression may be expressed through hostile thoughts, verbal aggression, irritability, or physical aggression. Competitive and violent online games are often considered more likely to stimulate aggressive responses because they involve conflict, reward aggressive actions, and may increase emotional arousal (Anderson, et.al., 2002)^{vii}.

Lim, et al., (2015) examined the relationship between Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD) and aggression among 714 middle-school students in Seoul, South Korea. The findings showed a significant linear association between IAD and aggression, with adolescents with IAD displaying more aggressive dispositions; anxiety, depression, and impulsivity mediated the pathway from aggression to IAD.

Ping, Su et al., (2018) conducted a 2-year longitudinal study among 323 Chinese adolescents to examine the predictors of Internet Gaming Addiction (IGA). The findings showed that peer victimization in Grade 7 predicted deviant peer affiliation, which subsequently increased normative beliefs about aggression and ultimately predicted higher IGA in Grade 9.

Andre Dowsett, Mervyn Jackson (2019)^{viii}, using a 2x2 true experimental design with 64 participants, tested whether either competition or a violent game increased aggression. The result

was that competition encouraged aggression more than violent video games.

Cuneyt Evren, et al., (2019)^{ix}, conducted a study on 987 volunteer university students in Ankara using the Buss-Perry aggression questionnaire, and found that students who were aggressive played online gaming a lot.

Joshi, A., et al., (2022)^x, Internet gaming disorder and aggression among students on school closure during COVID-19 pandemic. Journal of Nepal Health Research Council, 20(54), 41–46. Internet gaming disorder was significantly positively correlated with aggression among students during COVID-19 school closures ($r = 0.239$, $p < 0.001$).

A meta-analysis by Li et al. (2023)^{xi}, which examined 30 independent samples involving 20,790 participants, found a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.30$) between Internet Gaming Disorder and aggression. The study further reported that the association was stronger among Asian participants and younger age groups.

Another systematic review and meta-analysis conducted on 11,259 participants from 10 studies found a strong positive correlation between digital game addiction and aggression ($r = 0.531$)^{xii}. The findings indicated that individuals with higher levels of gaming addiction were more likely to exhibit aggressive and angry behaviors.

At the same time, some longitudinal studies suggest that although violent video games may increase aggressive reactions, the long-term effects on serious aggressive behavior are relatively small. Therefore, aggression appears to be influenced not only by gaming but also by factors such as personality traits, family environment, peer relationships, and emotional regulation (Kuss, D. J., & Griffiths, M. D., 2012)^{xiii}.

Xi Deng, et al., (2024)^{xiv}, conducted a cross-sectional survey and linear regression analysis of 9,306 Rollins students in 2024 and found that higher aggression associated with male, younger age, and internet gaming addiction symptoms and more violent game exposure.

Mohammed Ahmed (2024)^{xv}, conducted a study in Saudi Arabia, using a sample size of 350 university students aged 21–30 years. The Online Gaming Disorder Questionnaire and the Buss Perry Aggression Questionnaire were used and found that aggression and internet gaming disorder positively associated.

Farhana Ambreen (2024)^{xvi}, Out of 376 adolescents, 240 boys and 136 girls were conveniently sampled to identify adolescents who played online gaming. Using a cross-sectional study, two-way anova and mixed factorial anova, they found significant gender differences in IGD and aggression scores; significant main effect for aggression between gamers and non-gamers and between male/female participants ($p < .001$).

Wenxuan Gan, et al., (2024)^{xvii}, in a survey of 945 Chinese university students using measures of social dominance orientation, online disinhibition, moral disengagement, and aggression, found that online disinhibition did not directly predict aggression but indirectly influenced aggression through moral disengagement, while social dominance orientation significantly predicted both moral disengagement and

aggression, with femininity, masculinity, and androgyny moderating different pathways.

Rukhshana Kausar, et al., (2024)^{xviii}, conducted a study on PUBG addiction and aggression. In which they surveyed 158 men and 135 women aged 18-25, who were online gamers. The results of this study found that PUBG addiction and aggression are positively correlated. And gaming addiction was found to be more prevalent in men than in women.

Dr. Falguni Nagare and Dr. Anjali Kedari, (2025)^{xix}, collected data from young adolescents aged 22-26 years using a Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire and Online Gaming Addiction questionnaire and found that There is a significant positive correlation between game addiction and aggression.

Abdurrahman (2026) studied the relationship between online gaming intensity and verbal aggressive behavior among adolescents. In a correlational study involving 60 junior high school students, a moderate positive correlation was found between online gaming intensity and verbal aggression. This suggests that higher gaming intensity may be associated with increased verbal aggressive behavior among adolescents.

7. CONCLUSION

Online gaming has become one of the most popular forms of entertainment among adolescents and young adults. The reviewed literature suggests that there is a positive relationship between excessive online gaming and aggression, particularly among individuals who engage in violent games or exhibit symptoms of gaming addiction. Several studies have reported that prolonged exposure to competitive and violent gaming environments may increase aggressive thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.

However, the relationship between online gaming and aggression is complex and influenced by various factors, including age, personality, family environment, peer influence, and gaming duration. While some studies have found significant associations between gaming and aggression, others have reported only small or inconsistent effects. This indicates that online gaming alone is not sufficient to explain aggressive behavior.

Moderate and controlled gaming can provide entertainment, social interaction, and cognitive benefits, whereas excessive or problematic gaming may contribute to aggressive tendencies in some individuals. Therefore, promoting healthy gaming habits and parental monitoring is important. Further research is needed to better understand the long-term effects of online gaming on aggression, particularly among adolescents and young adults in different cultural settings.

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