

# The Lived Experiences of Young Learners Involved in Online Gaming

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## Abstract

In-person classes influencing behavioral changes that affect students' academic performance were evident for young learners throughout the post-pandemic time. For instance, exposure to technological activities, particularly online games played at home during lockdowns, has been associated with these behavioral changes. Thus, based on the behavioral change theory, this qualitative research study was carried out to explore the lived experiences among young learners on academic-related behavioral changes while indulging in online games. The phenomenological research design was used in the study, with six (6) purposefully selected informants - grade 3 learners based on the inclusion criteria. The interviews and focus group discussions data collection methods were administered using the quality-assured research guide questionnaires tested for validity and reliability by qualitative research experts. The research study developed four (4) major themes from noteworthy statements and saturated sub-themes from informants utilizing transcriptions, data line coding, thematic analysis, and interpretation. The study's major themes were (1) a sense of euphoria, (2) acquisition of 21st-century skills, (3) physical and mental health issues, and (4) online game escapism. Consequently, the research suggested holding a symposium among parents and young learners to discuss the positive and negative effects of online gaming on grade 3 learners. Furthermore, the study advised strengthening physical and outdoor school activities so that young learners, especially grade 3 pupils, could engage. With these type of activities, young learners' attention may be diverted from online gaming to more exciting, participatory, and pleasurable outdoor activities in schools and the community.

**Keywords:** *Online Games, Behavioral Change Theory, Post-pandemic, Young Learners, Outdoor Activities.*

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## Introduction

An online game is a video game mainly played or primarily played through the internet or any other accessible computer network at home, in the internet café, and anywhere they could access the internet (Adams, 2014). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is evident that most learners are exposed to these online games. Young learners, for instance, are one of the affected social groups since they have been forced to remain at home, away from their classmates, friends, and all of the activities they used to participate in before (Safarina & Halima, 2019).

Online gaming is prevalent among young learners and has been seen as means of promoting digital literacy, which is beneficial to their education (Burton, 2020). Based on studies, teachers employed online games as supplementary teaching tools for their classes, and some, but not all, showed substantial effects which enhance the learner's academic performance (Dumrique & Castillo, 2017; Felszeghy et al., 2019; Yudha & Utami, 2022). Even though online games are useful in education, especially for helping students do better in school, studies show they can lead to addiction. These studies found that most young male learners spent several hours a day playing online games, which led to them not getting enough sleep, not participating in class activities, and showing other signs of anxiety (Betonio et al., 2019). Likewise, the World Health Organization (2020) identified "digital gaming" or "video gaming" as *gaming disorders* that may lead to online gaming addiction that continues to increase rapidly in time of the COVID-19 pandemic (Elsayed, 2021). It is evident from the above statements that this research must be conducted to encourage Grade 3 learners to engage in physical activities rather than online gaming.

In this connection, the researcher became interested in performing a study on online games among Grade 3 learners after seeing a shift in the behavior of learners toward academics compared to online games. In view of this, the researcher wanted to explore the academic lived experiences.

## Methodology

In this study, the researcher utilized the phenomenological research design to understand people's lived experiences in relation to a certain phenomenon (Larsen & Adu, 2021). Furthermore, according to McNarry (2018), phenomenology is concerned with analyzing experience from the standpoint of the individual, "*bracketing*" assumptions that are taken for granted, and typical ways of viewing things. In addition, phenomenology is a method for doing qualitative research that centers its attention on the collective experiences of a sample of individuals. The technique's

primary objective is to describe the nature of the particular phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013).

In the conduct of this study, the researcher made sure that necessary letters of consent were secured and proper coordination with people who have direct involvement in this study was properly conduct. In addition, letter of informed consent was given to the participants to orient them on the purpose of the study and for them to know their extent of participation in the study being undertaken.

The researcher ensured the anonymity of the teacher-participants by using pseudonyms to conceal their real identity. All the information disclosed by the participants were treated with utmost confidentiality by strictly adhering to the provisions of Republic Act 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

## **Findings**

1. The lived experiences of grade 3 pupils involved in online gaming concerning their school performance were grounded in the two (2) generated major themes such as; the *Sense of Euphoria*, and the *Acquisition of the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Skills*. These two major themes were generated through thematic analysis, and were perceived to positively impact learners' school performance. Despite that the online games could change the Grade 3 pupils' behavior toward their academic performance with this presence of a sense of euphoria. However, there was a notable positive impact also to respondents to acquire the 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills that could lead them to have these advanced knowledge in technology, problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration.
2. The encountered challenges and difficulties of the Grade 3 pupils involved in online games were anchored to this generated major theme as *Physical and Mental Health Issues*. This major theme was generated due to the constant engagement of Grade 3 pupil respondents in online gaming who spent most of their time in playing these games. As a result, sudden worsening of vision, headache, poor health status, poor personal hygiene, persistent anger and anxiety, and aloof to people were the common challenges and difficulties observed with the research participants.
3. The coping mechanisms of grade 3 pupils involved in online gaming concerning their school performance was anchored to the generated major theme under *Online Game*

*Escapism.* This online game escapism was perceived to be spent in outdoor activities such as: valuing quality time with family through outdoor activities such as hiking, trekking, and picnicking; participating in school-related activities such as sports, dance troupe, choir, and the like; and having face-to-face social interaction with classmates, long-distance relatives, friends, and neighbors.

4. The study's generated proposed intervention program to mitigate the non-educational games in school and at home will be in the form of a symposium on the positive and negative effects of online games among grade 3 learners. This intervention program may absorb strategies for handling Grade 3 learners engaged in online games without imposing violent discipline on them. In addition, this symposium may equip parents with schemes to transform their children into engaging in more educational games online and outdoor activities. Then, learners could grasp online games' positive and negative effects on their lives, particularly their health, and studies. Finally, to divert learners' interests from online games into more physical and enjoyable outdoor activities other than sports.

## **Conclusion**

1. It is impossible to escape online games today, as the majority of learners are technology-dependent and evidently exposed to this activity during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns. As a result, learners are still interested in educational and non-educational online games because they can provide them with excitement and enjoyment while playing. However, some of the students at home utilized these online games to alleviate their boredom while awaiting the arrival of their parents.
2. Gaming today strengthens the 21st-century skills of the current generation in diverse manners. Playing online games for children initially supports problem-solving, demanding strategizing to surpass hurdles.
3. The unlimited realm of internet gaming has evolved into a coveted recreation for countless populations around the globe, particularly young learners. However, participating in online games may incur physical and health-related issues. These complexities include ocular strain, repetitive stress mischiefs, and obesity.
4. As the study demonstrated, participating in internet-based recreational activities can have negative and positive outcomes. Although they can be a great way to relax and socialize, they can also be habit-forming, leading to physical and mental health problems. It remains

essential to remember that moderate enjoyment is the key to staying happy and healthy. Without close supervision, internet-based games are capable of causing problems with both physical and mental health, despite the importance of moderation when playing them. Despite the entertainment that electronic diversions provide, their effects on children's health and cognition are ultimately negative. Parents should recognize these disadvantages and take precautions to prevent their children from engaging in excessive play.

5. The majority of children's coping strategies involved playing online games. These were acquired through spending quality time with peers, classmates, teachers, family members, and relatives, playing, connecting, and traveling. Coping mechanisms in online games are up to the users, with the assistance of those around them.

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