



Online gaming engagements, mental well-being, and work performance among young professionals: Basis for psychosocial intervention program development

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Abstract

Online gaming became part of people's lives since the introduction of the computer and internet even before studies which explore its advantages and disadvantages were taken into consideration. This study investigated the online gaming engagements, mental well-being and work performance of one hundred three (103) young professionals of the 3rd district of Laguna in the Philippines. They were selected through purposive sampling. The study used sequential explanatory mixed method which combines quantitative and qualitative method. Findings revealed that respondents have average gaming engagements, above average mental well-being and high work performance. The themes created were gaming attitude for online gaming engagements, healthy disposition for mental health and work attitude for work performance. It was also revealed that online gaming engagement and mental health is significantly related with work performance. The study proposed a psycho-social intervention program for young professional with high gaming engagements.

Keywords: *gaming attitude, healthy disposition, work attitude and sequential explanatory mixed method*

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Introduction

The 1980s were often remembered for its materialism and consumerism. It saw the rise and proliferation of the first personal computer and introduction of the internet. As it rises, computer games were also becoming popular. People started playing computer games without thinking of the possible advantages and disadvantages of doing so as the main concern is just the fun and entertainment it brings. Over time, they also started to appear in offices (Chikhani, 2015). The obvious explanation is that employees enjoy having a good time at work to break up their boredom. However, it is important to note that management typically disapproved of the idea of employees playing online games while at work because it was seen as a possible waste of time and a blow to productivity.

Online gaming is electronic game playing over a computer network, particularly over the internet (Ray, 2023). The term "game engagement" describes a player's dedication to their gaming activities. A gamer who is deeply immersed in their game is totally unaware of anything going on around them. Add the fact that some gamers are using virtual reality headsets that brings them on the actual world of game and separate the gamer from the actual world. Online gaming has becoming more popular nowadays. Howarth (2023) stated that approximately there are 3.09 billion around the world and it is expected to grow up to 3.32 billion in 2024. Clement (2021) discovered that the social component was a major driving force for the rising popularity of online gaming after conducting a survey of gaming audiences around the world. Moreover, 76% of players said that during the previous year, online gaming had grown in importance to their overall gaming experience. Further, average length of a session of binge gaming was 5.1 hours worldwide (Clement, 2021). These are indications of how online gaming dominates the life of a person in general that it covers almost 20% of people lives. With these statistics, the possibility of a negative impact on mental health is not in doubt.

Mental health is a condition of mental wellness that enables people to manage life's stressors, develop their potential, study and work effectively, and give back to their communities. It is a crucial element of health and well-being that supports both our individual and group capacity to decide, form connections, and influence the world we live in. A core human right is access to mental health. Additionally, it is essential for socioeconomic, communal, and personal development (WHO, 2022). According to Gibson

(2020), psychological well-being is a measure of mental health. Social, physiological, and emotional states are all included in it; someone with good mental health may feel balanced in these spheres of their existence. This implies that whatever factor that can influence people social, physiological and emotional states can disrupt the balance of mental well-being such as high level and uncontrollable online gaming engagement.

Work performance is history of obligations and capacity to do a good job. Employers have a number of ways to evaluate performance, including whether you execute assignments on schedule and to the required standards. Increasing your productivity is a good approach to progress your career because salary raises and promotions are frequently based on your performance indicators (Birt, 2022). The dilemma is millions of workers around the world have been compelled to work from home as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This gave birth to questions with regards on their work performance. However, new opportunities are made as new challenges are faced. Utilizing the virtual office, businesses and their employees have been introducing video games and characteristics similar to them into routine duties (Johnson, 2020).

According to Miley (2022), online gaming can be beneficial on employees on many ways. It helps people to relax, improved muscle flexibility, and motor skills, boost memory, increase employee engagements, improved decision-making process and improve collaboration and decision-making skills. Matter. This contrasts the study by Grinspoon (2020), which links gaming to sleeplessness, circadian rhythm abnormalities, depression, aggression, and anxiety. Without effective support, mental disorders and other mental health conditions can affect a person's confidence and identity at work, capacity to work productively, absences and the ease with which to retain or gain work. Moreover, Mahardi (2021) acknowledged that online gaming has negative impact such as neglect of responsibility. This could be a threat to a company when their employees are using their productive time at work to play online game instead.

This study is one step forward in understanding the possible relationship among online gaming engagements, mental health and work performance of 103 young professionals in San Pablo City Laguna.

In context, the researcher is an online gamer with wide experience playing different online games. This allows the researcher to observe both the positive and negative influence of online gaming. As a young professional, the researcher also experienced working with other young professionals who considered themselves also as gamer. Unfortunately, these colleagues have been shown nonproductive behaviors such as playing while still on duty which significantly affects their work performance. In the Philippines, studies concerning online gaming engagements and its influence on mental well-being and work performance of Filipinos is limited. With this in mind, the researcher would like to investigate and confirm whether online gaming engagement contributes to work performance. With the reasons stated above, the study was conceived.

Methodology

The study employed sequential explanatory mixed method research design based from Creswell and Clark's (2017) Visual Model of the Sequential Explanatory Paradigm to investigate the online gaming engagements, mental well-being and work performance of 103 young professionals of the 3rd district of Laguna in the Philippines. They were selected through purposive sampling. Instruments used were adapted standardized questionnaire namely: Game Engagement Questionnaire, Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) and Individual Work Performance Questionnaire. Four (4) participants with highest online gaming engagement and number of hours spent playing online games were selected to participate in the qualitative part of the study. Qualitative data were collected using in depth interview. It was transcribed manually by three psychometricians with experience in transcribing qualitative research to ensure reliability following interview protocol refinement by Castillo-Montoya (2016). It was coded using inductive coding to identify themes that might emerge based on the qualitative data. Themes were analyzed using thematic analysis.

To perform research that complies with ethical standards, several factors were taken into account. The test's creators were contacted for approval by the researcher. Participants signed an informed consent form before the study was conducted, and they received a briefing about the goals, topics, and methods of the study. Additionally, the participant's consent was requested in order to record the interview responses. Their information and

responses were handled with utmost anonymity and confidentiality in this regard. Each respondent was asked if they are willing to participate as a respondent voluntarily. Nobody was harmed, forced or compelled to participate.

Findings

Majority of the respondents were age 23-35 years old, male, single who are working as professionals in a private sector with a regular status. Moreover, in terms of their gaming experience, most of them already got 4-6 years and was followed by more than 15 years gaming experience and playing 5-6 hours per day.

Gaming attitude was the theme emerge from the analysis of qualitative data. Moreover, respondents can be described as mentally healthy based on the result above the median. Healthy disposition was the theme emerge from the analysis of qualitative data pertaining to their mental health. Further, in terms of work performance, task performance was perceived to have the highest score while counterproductive behavior was the least. Working attitude was the theme emerge from the analysis of qualitative data of work performance.

Results revealed that there is a significant difference on the level of gaming engagement when grouped according to their profile. For instance, as to negative affect when grouped according to the sector they work in. Working in a public sector was found to engage more in gaming for such motive. Likewise, it was also revealed that gaming through competence was higher for those respondents who played longer in years. Consequently, competence and immersion were also found higher for those who spent more time playing in a day. On the other hand, mental well-being was not found to differ when grouped according to their profile based on the findings. Finally, results revealed that work performance as to task performance tend to differ when grouped according to occupation. Executive, Managers, Supervisors was found to have higher task performance compared to other working groups.

There is a significant relationship among gaming engagement, mental well-being and work performance on some aspects of the variables. Competence, immersion, positive affect and flow was found to have significant relationship with work performance as to task and contextual performance. Further, flow was also found to be positively significant with

counterproductive behaviors. Finally, mental well-being was also found to be positively correlated with task and contextual performance.

An intervention program was proposed to target respondents with high gaming engagement. This will be done based on the principles of cognitive behavioral approach using psycho-education to assist respondents restructure their thoughts and behavior to achieve higher work performance.

Conclusions

This study investigated the online gaming engagements, mental well-being and work performance of 103 young professionals of the 3rd district of Laguna. Findings revealed that respondents have average gaming engagements, above average mental well-being and high work performance. The themes created were gaming attitude for online gaming engagements, healthy disposition for mental health and work attitude for work performance. Results revealed that working in a public sector was found to engage more in gaming through negative affect. It was also revealed that gaming through competence was higher for those respondents who played longer in years. Consequently, competence and immersion were also found higher for those who spent more time playing in a day. Executive, managers, supervisors were found to have higher task performance compared to other working groups. On the other hand, mental well-being was not found to differ when grouped according to their profile based on the findings. There is a significant relationship among gaming engagement, mental well-being and work performance on some aspects of the variables. Competence, immersion, positive affect and flow was found to have significant relationship with work performance as to task and contextual performance. Further, flow was also found to be positively significant with counterproductive behaviors. Finally, mental well-being was also found to be positively correlated with task and contextual performance. An intervention program was proposed to target respondents with high gaming engagement. This can be done based on the principles of cognitive behavioral approach using psychoeducation to assist respondents restructure their thoughts and behavior to achieve higher work performance.

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