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Online Gaming Addiction Among Youth: A Socio-Psychological Study on the Impact of PUBG in Belagavi City

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Abstract: The widespread adoption of digital devices has contributed to a steady rise in online gaming activity among young people across India. Multiplayer battle-royale games, particularly PUBG: Battlegrounds, have attracted a substantial youth following owing to their immersive gameplay and real-time social interaction. While gaming in measured amounts may serve as a legitimate recreational outlet, sustained and unregulated engagement has been associated with a range of adverse psychological and behavioral outcomes. This study examines gaming habits and the socio-psychological consequences of PUBG engagement among youth in Belagavi City, Karnataka. Using a quantitative research design, primary data were gathered from 60 respondents through a structured questionnaire. Results indicate that 97% of participants owned smartphones, enabling easy and frequent access to gaming platforms. PUBG was identified as the most commonly played game (49%). Behavioral effects including aggression (49%) and reduced concentration (35%) were prominently reported, alongside smaller proportions indicating loneliness and compulsive gaming tendencies. The study concludes that while moderate gaming does not inherently pose a risk, prolonged and unstructured gaming can disrupt behavioral patterns and psychological well-being. Responsible gaming practices, parental involvement, and digital awareness campaigns are recommended as preventive measures.

Keywords*: Online Gaming, PUBG, Gaming Addiction, Youth Behavior, Socio-Psychological Impact, Digital Media, Belagavi.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, digital transformation deeply into the social fabric of everyday life, reshaping how young people communicate, learn, and spend their spare time. The growing availability of affordable smartphones and reliable internet connectivity has made online entertainment more accessible than at any point in history. Among the many forms of digital engagement that have flourished in this environment, online gaming has emerged as one of the most dominant.

Multiplayer online games occupy a unique position in contemporary youth culture. Unlike passive forms of entertainment such as watching films or browsing social media, these games demand active participation, strategic thinking, and real-time cooperation or competition with other players. PUBG: Battlegrounds, one of the most widely downloaded games globally, exemplifies this format. Its battle-royale structure — in which players compete for survival against one another in a shrinking environment — creates a sense of urgency and engagement that few other games replicate.

India has witnessed a particularly rapid rise in mobile gaming, and cities across Karnataka are no exception. In semi-urban areas such as Belagavi, the combination of increasing smartphone penetration and growing youth populations has created fertile ground for gaming culture to take root. Yet despite this visible growth, very few empirical studies have examined how gaming — and PUBG specifically — is affecting the psychological and social lives of young people in this region.

This research was undertaken to address that gap. By studying the gaming habits, emotional responses, and behavioral patterns of youth in Belagavi, the study aims to contribute a locally grounded perspective to a conversation that has largely been shaped by research from urban centers and Western contexts.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The academic conversation around online gaming addiction has grown considerably over the past two decades, shaped by contributions from psychology, sociology, and public health.

Griffiths (2010) was among the earlier scholars to argue that excessive gaming shares structural similarities with other behavioral addictions, characterized by salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse. His framework has since become a widely referenced starting point in gaming addiction research. Building on this, Kuss and Griffiths (2012) conducted a systematic review that identified a consistent association between excessive gaming and psychological distress, academic decline, and social withdrawal among adolescents — a demographic they argued was particularly susceptible due to incomplete impulse regulation.

Lemmens, Valkenburg, and Peter (2011) contributed further evidence by demonstrating that pathological gaming was linked to diminished concentration, poor interpersonal functioning, and lower life satisfaction among young players. These findings were complemented by the work of Anderson and Bushman (2001), who established through meta-analysis that prolonged exposure to violent video games was associated with increased aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

More recent scholarship has turned its attention to PUBG and similar battle-royale formats. Mamun et al. (2021) reported that frequent PUBG players exhibited signs of emotional instability, disrupted sleep, and heightened anxiety. Rosendo-Rios, Trott, and Shukla (2022) conducted a systematic review linking intensive gaming with stress, social isolation, and reduced academic motivation. Hassan (2023) and Khan (2023) have similarly documented links between gaming disorder and emotional dysregulation, while Iqbal et al. (2024) found meaningful associations between gaming addiction and aggression among adolescent samples.

More recently, Paulus et al. (2023) highlighted how the reward mechanisms embedded in competitive online games — including rank progression, in-game achievements, and social validation — activate neural pathways similar to those involved in substance-related cravings, making disengagement psychologically challenging. Wartberg, Kriston, and Thomasius (2022) further noted that gaming disorder in adolescence predicted poorer mental health outcomes in early adulthood, underscoring the long-term developmental implications of early intervention.

Collectively, these studies establish a well-documented foundation for examining gaming behavior not simply as entertainment, but as a psychologically complex activity with real consequences — particularly when it becomes excessive.

➢ *Objectives of the Study*

- To analyse gaming frequency and duration among youth
- To examine psychological responses associated with PUBG gaming
- To assess the impact of gaming on concentration and daily activities
- To recommend preventive measures for gaming addiction

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

➢ *Research Design*

A quantitative research design was employed to systematically examine behavioral and psychological patterns associated with online gaming among youth.

➢ *Data Collection*

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire that covered three broad areas: gaming habits and preferences, emotional and psychological responses to gameplay, and perceived impact on daily life and academic functioning.

➢ *Study Area*

The study was conducted in Belagavi City, Karnataka — a semi-urban region with a growing young population and increasing levels of smartphone and internet penetration.

➢ *Sample Size and Sampling Method*

A total of 60 respondents were selected through convenience sampling, with inclusion criteria based on active engagement in online gaming. The sample was drawn from youth between the ages of 15 and 30 residing in Belagavi.

➢ *Data Analysis*

Descriptive statistical analysis, specifically percentage-based interpretation, was used to summarize and present the findings in a clear and accessible manner.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

➢ *Smartphone Accessibility*

An overwhelming majority of respondents — 97% — reported owning a personal smartphone. This figure reflects the broader national trend of rapid mobile penetration in India and highlights the structural ease with which young people can access gaming platforms at any time. As Khan (2023) observed, device accessibility is among the most significant environmental factors enabling habitual gaming behavior.

➢ *Gaming Participation*

Approximately 68% of participants confirmed regular engagement in online gaming. This proportion indicates that gaming is no longer a marginal activity but a mainstream one, forming a consistent part of how youth in Belagavi spend their time.

➢ *Game Preferences*

Among the games reported, PUBG was the most frequently cited preference, chosen by 49% of participants. Ludo followed at 43%, while Rummy accounted for 8%. The gap between PUBG and other games is notable — the former

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demands significantly more time, attention, and emotional investment than the latter two, which are comparatively casual in nature (Mamun et al., 2021).

➢ *Gaming Duration*

Daily gaming time was distributed as follows:

- 1–2 hours: 69% of participants
- 2–4 hours: 28% of participants
- 4–6 hours: 3% of participants

While the majority of respondents fell within a moderate usage range, the 31% who played for two or more hours daily represent a segment worth monitoring. Research consistently shows that the likelihood of behavioral and psychological disruption increases with gaming duration (Lemmens et al., 2011; Wartberg et al., 2022).

➢ *Psychological and Behavioral Effects*

The behavioral and emotional effects reported by participants were as follows:

- Aggression: 49% — the most commonly reported effect, consistent with the established literature on competitive and violent gaming (Anderson & Bushman, 2001)
- Reduced concentration: 35% — suggesting that extended screen engagement may be impairing attentional capacity (Kuss & Griffiths, 2012)
- Loneliness: 10% — indicating that for a subset of players, gaming may be substituting for rather than supplementing social interaction (Griffiths, 2010)
- Compulsive gaming behavior: 6% — reflecting early signs of dependency and difficulty self-regulating gaming activity (Hassan, 2023; Paulus et al., 2023)

These findings are consistent with the patterns documented in comparable studies and suggest that the psychological risks associated with PUBG are not hypothetical but observable even within a relatively small sample.

➢ *Discussion*

The data gathered from this study point to a delicate reality. For most youth in Belagavi, gaming — including PUBG — is a recreational activity that occupies a manageable portion of daily life. The majority play within moderate time limits and do not report severe disruption to their functioning. In this sense, gaming is not inherently problematic.

However, the findings also reveal that a meaningful proportion of players are experiencing behavioral and emotional effects that warrant attention. Aggression, in particular, was reported by nearly half of all respondents — a proportion too significant to attribute to coincidence. The competitive architecture of PUBG, which places players in high-stakes survival scenarios, is designed to generate emotional intensity. This intensity — including excitement, anxiety, and frustration — can, over time, begin to influence how players regulate their emotions outside of the game as well (Mamun et al., 2021; Rosendo-Rios et al., 2022).

Reduced concentration, reported by more than a third of participants, also deserves serious consideration. The fast-paced, visually stimulating environment of online games creates a form of cognitive engagement that ordinary academic or professional tasks cannot easily replicate. For young people who spend substantial time in this environment, transitioning to slower-paced activities may become genuinely difficult (Paulus et al., 2023).

It is also worth noting that compulsive behavior, though reported by only 6% of respondents, likely represents an underestimate. Research suggests that individuals experiencing gaming-related dependency are often reluctant to self-identify as such, making self-reported prevalence figures lower than actual rates (Wartberg et al., 2022).

V. CONCLUSION

This study offers an empirically grounded account of how online gaming — particularly PUBG — has become integrated into the everyday lives of youth in Belagavi City. The findings affirm that gaming culture is well-established in this semi-urban context and that its psychological footprint is measurable.

Moderate engagement with online games does not, by itself, constitute a problem. However, when gaming becomes a primary source of emotional regulation, social interaction, or identity — and particularly when it begins to displace academic engagement, physical activity, and face-to-face relationships — it requires thoughtful intervention.

The most effective responses to gaming addiction are preventive rather than reactive. Schools and colleges can incorporate digital wellness into their health education curricula. Families can establish shared understandings around screen time without resorting to punitive restrictions. Healthcare professionals can be equipped to recognize early signs of gaming disorder and provide appropriate referrals.

The broader goal is not to cast gaming as a social hazard, but to ensure that young people engage with it in ways that are conscious, balanced, and self-directed. Digital literacy — the capacity to critically understand and manage one's own relationship with technology — is increasingly an essential life skill, and one that must be actively cultivated.

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