

Level of Gaming, Social Support and Emotional Intelligence among Online Gamers

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Abstract: *Since 2020, the pandemic has given rise to solitary activities and many of us got dependent on technology. Likewise, the influence online games have was also seen to be elevating. Putting a light on this issue, this study deals with two variables, social support and emotional intelligence, which might have an effect on level of gaming. India being a collectivistic society, social support plays a vital role in behaviour pattern of an individual. This research aimed to investigate the effect of social support on level of gaming and emotional intelligence. A sample of 161 young adults (16-26 years old) from India, were chosen. It was also found that social support can be a protective factor while concerning with level of gaming and emotional intelligence. This paper also discusses the limitations of the research and recommendation for further study in the area.*

Keywords: social support, emotional intelligence, online gamers, young adults

1. Introduction

Online gamers are people who enjoy playing various type of digital or online games. The history of online gaming dates back to the time when computers were invented. Between 1963-1993 important changes in technology took place. As host-based network and time-sharing Internet was created. People started realising that everyone enjoy playing games in a group rather than playing alone which gave rise to Multiplayer games. Around 2007 smartphones became more popularized which also made internet gaming easily accessible to all. Since then, till today's date with launching of various games we can find most of the youngsters engaging in online gaming. E-sports, also known as electronic sport is like a competition among professional gamers. The first E-sport event took place in October 1972 at Stamford university.

But as the number of people getting affected by Internet Gaming Disorder is increasing, researchers are trying to find relationship between various psychological variables and gaming behaviour. E-sports is well celebrated in countries like China, USA etc. There are many researchers and psychologist who are trying to find a healthy way of gaming and what can be done to avoid the causalities. While E-sport has gained popularity in other countries, it is still developing in India. Because of Pandemic and the lockdown, gaming platforms started gaining more attention. Creating a carrier in gaming is still not accepted in India. This is where social support plays an important role.

There have been various researches which shows that there is an impact of social support on the way we think. Sometimes people engage themselves in gaming behaviour because they find virtual world more comforting than the real world. The people who play multiplayer games, get the social support from their teammates and they find a sense of belongingness with them. Some researches show that gamers get social support from virtual world but it doesn't help them while dealing with real world problems.

Every human has some or the other hobbies. Some people like to play sports, some loves cooking while some enjoying

reading. Likewise for gamers playing video games is like a hobby. But sometimes when they don't get enough support from others and it might lead to some negative outcomes. In some country's internet gaming is not socially accepted to be somebody's hobby. Gaming has a social stigma of being addictive. Games are considered to be unhealthy, dangerous but this only happens because these people have lack of exposure in gaming (Kriss, 2019).

Human is a social animal, which makes social support a very important factor. India being a collectivistic country, we are always trying to seek social validation. The age from 18 year to 25 year are very important age when we develop socially. Important life decisions are made during this age. Support from our family, friends, mentor and significant other plays an important role while dealing with this age group. Being able to understand our own emotions and that of others help us to become more empathetic and sensible towards situations.

This is an attempt to show that what role does social support play in a gamers life while dealing with his emotions. It will also help us to gain an Indian perspective towards gaming

2. Literature Survey

Online gaming and social support:

A study by Sabine Trepte, Leonard Reinecke and Keno Juechems in year 2012 on the topic the social side of gaming: How playing online computer games creates online and offline social support was done on the members of E-sport clans. The data was collected through an online survey via online portal of Electronic Sports league. This study concluded that online gaming can lead to strong social ties, if gamers start engaging in online activities that continue beyond the game and extend to offline activities (Sabine Trepte, 2012)

Huon Longman, Dr. Erin O'Connor, and Patricia Obst, (2009) in their work The Effect of Social Support Derived from World of Warcraft on Negative Psychological Symptoms. This study was done by conducting an online survey on the players of MMOG World of Warcraft (WoW).

The results revealed that, players get in games social support which reduces negative psychological symptoms but this effect was not maintained when social support from offline sources were considered (Huon Longman, 2009)

A study by Samuel M.Thama, Morgan E.Ellithorpeb, Dar Meshib (2020) on topic Real-world social support but not in-game social support is related to reduced depression and anxiety associated with problematic gaming. Online survey was conducted on both general university population and Esports group. Results showed that real life social support helps in reducing depression and anxiety whereas in game social support was unrelated to both. (Samuel M.Thama, 2020)

Social support and emotional intelligence:

A study by Emma Gallagher and Dianne A Vella- Brodrick on Social support and emotional intelligence as predictors of subjective well-being was done on 267 adults. By using the method of Exploratory hierarchical multiple regression analyses, it was found that there is a relationship between social support and emotional intelligence (Brodrick, 2008)

Annamaria Di Fabio and Maureen E Kenny (2014) in their study; The contributions of emotional intelligence and social support for adaptive career progress among Italian youth, they conducted a survey on 254 Italian high school students. Result showed that EI and teacher social support were positively associated with resilience and self-perceived. (Kenny, 2014)

Freng Kong, Xuqun You, Jingjing Zhao in their work Emotional intelligence and life satisfaction in Chinese university students: The mediating role of self-esteem and social support, which was done on 489 Chinese college students of the age group 17-23 years. Data was collected by using Wong Law Emotional Intelligence Scale and the Multidimensional Scale for perceived social support, Rosenberg self-esteem scale, and the satisfaction with life scale. Results obtained by Path analysis revealed that social support has a mediating role in Emotional intelligence. (Freng Kong, 2012)

Emotional intelligence and gaming:

A study by Kagan Kircaburun, Zsolt Demetrovics, Mark D. Griffiths, Orsolya Király, Bernadette Kun & Şule Betül Tosuntaş was conducted to explore Trait Emotional Intelligence and Internet Gaming Disorder among Gamers. Total 478 online gamers completed a self-report online survey, including validated psychometric scales assessing the aforementioned constructs. Based on the results, trait EI is inversely associated with IGD and affects gaming for different motives among adolescent and adult gamers. (Kagan Kircaburun, 2020)

Christothea Herodotou, Maria Kambouri, Niall Winters in their work: The role of trait emotional intelligence in gamers' preferences for play and frequency of gaming which was done on 1051 young adult US/European gamers, who play frequently the online massively multiplayer game, World of Warcraft. Results showed that Trait EI was also negatively associated with frequency of gaming suggesting

that lower scorers on trait EI are more likely associated with more frequent game use. (Christothea Herodotou, 2011)

A study by Della L Dang, Meng Xuan Zhang, Karlas Kin-hei Leong and Anise M.S Wu was done on topic The Predictive Value of Emotional Intelligence for Internet Gaming Disorder: A 1-Year Longitudinal Study. This was a longitudinal study which was conducted on 282 Chinese university students who voluntarily completed an anonymous questionnaire. Results were found using path analysis method. According to the results trait emotional intelligence had a protective but indirect effect on IGD tendency. (Della L Dang, 2019)

3. Methods

The sample size is of size 161 young adult, between the age group 16 to 26 years. The sample is inclusive of all genders. The sample is selected only from the population of India. The sample was collected through snowball sampling method.

Snowball sampling is a sampling method used by researchers to generate a pool of participants for a research study through referrals made by individuals who share a particular characteristic of research interest with the target population (Frey, 2018)

The tests are provided to be the population based on purposive sampling which means the test was sent to the young adults from India who play online games for minimum 6 hours per week. The tests were distributed through Google forms on platforms of social media such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn.

The questionnaire was completed only by participants who completed the following criteria:

- 1) Spend minimum 6 hours on online games per week
- 2) Be within the age range 16-26 years

For social support: The multidimensional Scale of perceived social support (MSPPS) developed by George Zimet, Nancy Dahlem, Sara Zimet, Gordon Farley (1988).

For online gaming: Internet Gaming Disorder Scale- Short Form (IGDS9-SF) developed by Pontes and Griffith (2015).

For emotional intelligence: The Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) by Schutte (1988). It uses four sub-scales which are: emotional perception, utilizing emotions, managing self-relevant emotions, and managing other's emotions.

The tools mentioned above were procured from valid, trusted and official resources online. They were compiled and circulated as one test for the population mentioned earlier. Permission was taken from the heads of respective college department from where the data was collected. The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics and the correlation coefficient which was reported quantitatively, thus either accepting the hypothesis.

The variables that are used in this study are quantifiable. This research is a correlational study of non-experimental

design. The results are stated quantitatively using the correlation coefficient.

Since the nature of the research is correlational, Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient and descriptive statistics was used to find a relationship between social support and online gaming separately, and social support and emotional intelligence among online gamers separately. Pearson's product moment correlation is a measure of the strength of a linear association between two variables are denoted by 'r'. The strength of relationship between variables is determined by seeing if the Pearson's product correlation coefficient value 'r' is closer to +1 or -1, depending on whether the relationship is positive or negative.

4. Results

	Level of Gaming	Social Support	Emotional Intelligence
Level of Gaming	1		
Social Support	-.167	1	
Emotional Intelligence	-.213	.459	1

Based on the calculations from Pearson's product moment correlation, the calculated r value for Level of gaming and social support is -.167, calculated r value for level of gaming and emotional intelligence is -.213, and the calculated r value for social support and emotional intelligence is 0.459

Results indicated a positive relationship between social support and emotional intelligence, whereas a negative relationship was found between social support and level of gaming; and between emotional intelligence and level of gaming. Thus rejecting the null hypothesis.

5. Discussion

The influence of online gaming on adolescence and young adults seems to be shooting up since the beginning of the pandemic. Excessive gaming usually involves a person spending maximum time in front of their mobile/ computer screen while not paying enough attention to their social life. Social support plays a crucial part in the level of gaming that a person engages themselves in. Real life social support from family, friends and significant others also has an association with emotional intelligence among online gamers. As both social support and emotional intelligence has an impact on the time spent on online gaming, it is important to understand it as a concept. To investigate the relationship between social support, emotional intelligence and level of gaming among young adults, a data of 161 sample was collected from all over India. The responses were collected through the means of google form which was circulated through means of social media. Responses were cleared and sorted on excel by using descriptive statistics and Pearson product correlation coefficient.

Discussion of the study

Data analysis and result of this study indicate that an individual's emotional intelligence or social support received from family, friends and significant other have a significant relationship with level of gaming.

The sample size is of 170 young adults, between the age group 18 to 26 years. The mean age of the sample is $M=20.5$ years, with 123 males and 47 females.

$N=13$ had the lowest scores on the IGDS9, indicating lower level of gaming, while only few participants ($n=7$) scored above 30 which indicate slightly higher level of gaming. Most participants ($n=150$) scored moderately, indicating moderate level of gaming.

Most participants ($n=97$) scored highest on the MSPSS, indicating high perceived social support, while ($n=65$) scored moderately indicating medium perceived social support. Only few participants ($n=8$) scored low indicating low perceived support.

Some participants ($n=27$) scored lowest on SSEIT, indicating low emotional intelligence, while ($n=32$) scored highest indicating high emotional intelligence. Most people scored moderately ($n=111$) indicating medium emotional intelligence.

Based on the data found, most participants who scored high on the SSEIT, indicating a good emotional intelligence also scored high on the MSPSS, indicating a clear presence of social support. This finding is consistent with the finding of Moshe Zeider (Zeider, 2019) and Gerald Matthews (Matthews, 2019) where they stated that social support was a notable mediator while considering the effects of EI. From the research they also suggested that it is crucial to understand the advantages of EI from the social perspective. (Matthews, 2019). A study by Ester Lopez-Zafra and Karima El Ghoudani found out that, social support and emotional intelligence are associated in such a way that social support helps to elevate emotional intelligence (Zafra, 2019). This combination might help us lead to healthy youth development in order to create healthier societies in coming years (Zafra, 2019). Our findings are also parallel with the results found by Leehu Zysberg and Anna Zisberg, social support showed a positive association with emotional intelligence (Zisberg, 2020). In research by Annamarua Di Fabio and Maureen E Kenny, it was found that emotional intelligence and social support had a significant positive relationship and emotional intelligence can be enhanced through training (Kenny). Reza Rostami, Khadijeh Shahmohamadi, and four others conducted a study to investigate the relationship among self-efficacy, emotional intelligence and perceived social support. It was found that both emotional intelligence and social support has a considerable effect on self-efficacy. This research also received that social support has an effectful role in elevating emotional intelligence and self-efficacy (Reza Rostami *1, 2010). An interesting study was conducted by Annamaria Di Fabio on fluid intelligence in social support and role of ability based emotional intelligence. The results indicated that there is a strong relationship between social support and emotional intelligence (Fabio, 2015)

It was found that every participant who scores high on the MSPSS, indicating satisfactory social support, scored moderate to low on the IGDS9, indicating average or low level of gaming. These findings point towards negative

correlation among the given variables. This result is accordant with the findings by Samuel.M Tham (M.Tham, 2020), Morgan E. Ellithorpe and Dar Meshi (Morgan E.Ellithorpe, 2020). According to them, reduced real-world social support led to problematic gaming (M.Tham, 2020) (Morgan E.Ellithorpe, 2020). They also quoted that maintaining a real-world social support might help in facing problematic gaming behaviours. (M.Tham, 2020) (Morgan E.Ellithorpe, 2020). Another research by Lukasz D. Kaczmarek and Dairusz Draskowski where it was found that spending increased time on gaming will lead to increase in online social support from the players but will deteriorate the real-world social support (Draskowski, 2014). The findings are also consistent with the research done on Chinese university students by Meng Xuan Zhang, Xinuri Wang, Shu M. Yu, Anise M.S. Wu. The result found was pointing towards the negative correlation between social support and Internet Gaming Disorder (Meng Xuan Zhang, 2019). While concluding the respective research, they also mentioned that Positive psychology interventions can be incorporate in school setting in an attempt of preventing the Internet Gaming Disorder (Meng Xuan Zhang, 2019). A study by Thomas AC and Allen Phillips showed results parallel to our findings. In their attempt to investigate the role of social support in gaming, they found out that social support acts as a protective factor in relation with gaming frequency (Thomas, 2011). An interesting approach was taken by Tyler Prochnow, Logan Hartnell and Megan S. Patterson where they investigated factors like depressive symptoms, friendships and social support through online gaming. The results indicated that social support and online gaming has a significant effect on depressive symptoms (Tyler Prochnow, 2021). They also mentioned that building online relationships can also be proven helpful in providing social capital to avoid the feeling of isolation (Tyler Prochnow, 2021)

From the available data, it was found that participants who scored high on SSEIT, indicating high emotional intelligence, scored moderate to high on the IGDS9, indicating medium to high level of gaming. These findings are consistent with the research by Christothea Herodotou, Maria Kambouri and Niall Winters (Christothea Herodotou, 2011), where they found out that Emotional Intelligence was negatively correlated to frequency of gaming. This suggests that lower Emotional Intelligence is associated with frequent gaming (Christothea Herodotou, 2011). In another research by Kagan Kircaburun, Mark D. Griffiths and Orsolya Kiraly Bernadette, it was found that Trait emotional intelligence is negatively linked with Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD) (Kagan Kircaburun, 2019). They also mentioned that there are different motives among adolescent and adult gamers for indulging in gaming (Kagan Kircaburun, 2019). We can also find the relevance of our findings through a study by Dexin Che, Jianping Hu and Bin Li, where they found out that online gaming affects the three dimensions of emotional intelligence i.e self-management, social skills, and empathy (Dexin Che, 2017). A one-year longitudinal study by Della L. Dang and Meng Xuan Zhang reveals that emotional intelligence has indirect effect on IGD in both cross sectional and longitudinal data (Della L. Dang, 2019). The findings by Sadaf Zahra, Shoaib Kiani and three more are consistent with our results. In this study, they investigated

internet gaming, emotional intelligence, psychological distress among university students. They found out that internet gaming had significant positive relation with psychological distress and it had negative relationship with emotional intelligence (Sadaf Zahra, 2020). It was also found that students who played after mid-night were more psychologically distressed than those who played during morning, evening, or early night time (Sadaf Zahra, 2020). Another research by James D.A Parker, Laura J. Summerfeldt, Robyn N. Taylor, Patricia H Kloosterman and Kateryna V. Keefer suggests that problematic gaming was negatively correlated to emotional intelligence (James D.A Parker, 2013)

Lastly it can be said that having a significant social support can help us control level of gaming and emotional intelligence. In India, societal ideologies and the thoughts of the community has an important role to play in building an individual's self-concept. Not interacting with people more often may result in desensitisation towards what other feels and which leads to depletion of emotional intelligence.

6. Conclusion

The influence of online gaming among young adults is elevating. There are multiple reasons for a person to get engaged in gaming activities. It started with being a leisure pursuit, but gradually grew to become an important part of some individual's quotidian activity. India being a collectivistic society, social support plays a vital role here. Deprivation of the social support from their parents, peers or significant other may lead the person being engaged in solitary activities. They try to seek the lost support through online platforms. Isolation may also lead to alleviation of emotional intelligence. Being able to understand one's own emotions and of others is extremely important, especially for young adults as they are going through so many physical and mental changes. This research will contribute to the understanding of significance of real-life social support and effects of gaming on emotional intelligence.

7. Future Scope

Suggestions for further study

- 1) To build on the current literature research literature, further studies can consider the Value theory by Derek A. Burril. According to Burril, study on Value theory will help us explore the concept of value from a gamer's perspective, and if they are trying to express how they feel through the gaming experiences (Burrill, 2014).
- 2) Variables such as escapism can also be used to investigate if the individual is engaging in gaming as a leisure activity or as a way to escape a particular situation.
- 3) Other variables like social anxiety, peer pressure, loneliness, self-esteem, aggression, stress, self-concept, personality traits can also be studied with respect to online gaming.
- 4) Furthermore, it is also important to investigate if online gaming has an elevating effect on concentration, reflexes, decision making,
- 5) Ways to practice healthy gaming can be studied by taking into consideration some positive psychology

variables and implementing them to reduce the negative side effects of gaming.

- 6) Mindfulness and its possible impact on online gamers can also be studied.
- 7) Letting this study to serve as a channel for future researches in the field of online gaming, other factors can also be brought into picture. Variables like parenting styles, family environment, educational background can be considered while exploring the gaming behaviour.
- 8) The acknowledgement of social support and its significance can help our society to deal with various issues that are faced by the young generation.
- 9) From Indian perspective, online gaming is looked upon as men's activity whereas emotions are considered as women's expertise. A comparative study can be conducted to see if there are any gender difference when it comes to emotional intelligence and social support among online gamers.

Delimitations and limitations

To study level of gaming, young adults from India between the age group 18 to 26 years were chosen.

- 1) The sample size was small.
- 2) Majority of the participants were male and very few were female.
- 3) Due to the lack of in-person instructions, test administration and data collection, many participants opted out of the study, halfway through the study.
- 4) Furthermore, majority of the sample was from Maharashtra state and very few from other states of India.

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Author Profile



Vaidehi Dukhande, a final year student pursuing an honours degree from Maharashtra, India. This was my attempt to dig deeper into the issues faced by today's youth and explore various dimensions and effects of gaming behaviour.