



Online game and Social Competency

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Abstract

Affordable and accessible internet has transformed the way video games are played, enabling global connections within shared gaming spaces. On the surface, participating in these environments seems socially beneficial, as they allow players to connect, interact, and learn from others. However, concerns have arisen about potential social consequences, leading to losses in offline sociability. Research has examined these claims, but consistent relationships between social competence and online video game involvement remain elusive. A study by Kowert and Old meadow (2013) explored this issue with 515 participants. The results revealed unique relationships between social skills and video game involvement within online gaming populations. Surprisingly, these links were not as negative or broad as hypothesized. In other words, playing online games didn't necessarily lead to social ineptitude. Moreover, a 2017 study found that engagement in massively multiplayer online (MMO) games correlated with a stronger sense of social identity. This social identity was associated with higher self-esteem, greater social competence, and reduced loneliness. So, while online gaming environments can impact social skills, the effects are nuanced. Rather than universally hindering social competence, they may even offer compensatory benefits. Players' social profiles vary, and stereotypical attributions of social ineptitude among online gamers are not always accurate. In summary, online games can influence social skills, but the outcomes depend on individual experiences and context.

Key words – Online Game, Social Competency, Game Addiction, Emotional Intelligence, Mindfulness

Introduction - The concept of online gaming refers to playing video games over the internet, either individually or with other players from around the world. It provides a virtual platform where gamers can connect, communicate, and compete in various game genres, including



strategy, shooter, role-playing, sports, and more¹. Whether battling foes in a fantasy realm, scoring goals in a virtual soccer match, or collaborating in a cooperative mission, online games offer diverse experiences that transcend geographical boundaries.

Social competence refers to a person's effectiveness in social interactions. It encompasses a range of skills and abilities needed for successful adaptation in social contexts. Here are some key aspects:

1.Social Skills: These are the practical abilities to navigate social situations. They include understanding social cues, active listening, empathy, and effective communication.

2.Emotional Intelligence: Social competence involves recognizing and managing emotions, both in oneself and others. This skill helps individuals build positive relationships and handle conflicts constructively.

3.Perspective-Taking: Being able to see situations from another person's point of view is crucial. It allows for better understanding and empathy, enhancing social interactions.

4.Adaptability: Socially competent individuals adjust their behaviour based on the context. They can read social norms and choose appropriate responses.

5.Problem-Solving: Social competence includes the ability to handle challenges, resolve conflicts, and find solutions in social settings.

Social competence isn't just about being extroverted or having many friends—it's about navigating relationships effectively while maintaining positive connections with others.

Effects of playing online games on teenagers:

Positive Aspects:

1.Social Interaction: Online games provide a virtual stage for young people to connect with others. They can form friendships, collaborate, and learn teamwork and problem-solving skills.

2.Cognitive Benefits: Some research suggests that gaming may improve attention control and spatial reasoning. However, the extent of these benefits in the real world remains unclear.

Negative Aspects:

1.Health Risks: Excessive gaming can lead to repetitive stress injuries, such as carpal tunnel syndrome, "gamer's thumb," and tennis elbow. Vision problems, sleep deprivation, and obesity are also associated with prolonged screen time.



2.Social Problems: Online game addiction, violence within games, communication barriers, and escapism are potential negative consequences.

In summary, moderation and awareness are essential when it comes to online gaming. Encouraging a balanced approach that considers both benefits and risks is crucial for teenagers.

Signs of online game addiction (also known as internet gaming disorder) in teens include:

1.Poor Performance: Excessive video game playing leads to poor performance at school, work, or household responsibilities.

2.Withdrawal Symptoms: When games are taken away or gaming isn't possible, teens may experience sadness, anxiety, or irritability.

3.Obsessive Thinking: Constantly thinking about video or internet games.

4.Loss of Interest: Neglecting other hobbies or friendships due to gaming.

5.Decline in Personal Hygiene: A noticeable decrease in self-care and grooming.

6.Inability to Set Limits: Teens struggle to limit the time spent gaming¹²³. If you suspect addiction, seeking medical care is essential.

Parents role in resolving game addiction of their teens:

1.Open Communication: Create a safe and non-judgmental environment for conversation. Listen actively to understand their perspective.

2.Set Healthy Boundaries: Negotiate screen time strategies together. Agree on clear limits for video gaming.

3.Highlight the Issue: Help your teen understand the negative effects of excessive gaming on their life. Discuss how it impacts family, social interactions, education, and other vital areas.

Empathy and understanding are key when addressing gaming addiction

Parents can play a crucial role in enhancing their teens' social competency. Here are some effective strategies:

1.Model Empathy: Demonstrate empathy in your interactions with others. Show your teen how to respond to others' feelings, fostering understanding and compassion.

2.Encourage Helping Behaviour:

i)Volunteering in the community or assisting a sibling with homework can build empathy and a sense of responsibility.



ii) Discuss different perspectives in conflicts or disagreements, helping your teen understand others' viewpoints.

iii) Create Opportunities for Adaptability:

iv) Expose your teen to diverse experiences by encouraging them to try new activities or join clubs.

v) Discuss scenarios and potential solutions, helping them think critically and adapt to change. Social competence is nurtured through practice, guidance, and positive role modelling.

Helping teens manage their online gaming habits is essential for maintaining a healthy balance. Here are some strategies parents can use:

1. Set Clear Limits: Negotiate screen time boundaries with your teen. Establish specific hours for gaming on weekdays and weekends. Consider consequences if these limits are exceeded—for instance, temporarily disabling Wi-Fi.

2. Use Parental Controls:

i) **Communication Management:** Disable voice chat and manage communication settings on game consoles or devices.

ii) **Content Restrictions:** Use parental controls to restrict inappropriate content.

iii) **Screen Time Management:** Set time limits to prevent excessive gaming.

iv) **Spending Limits:** Control in-game purchases.

v) **Model Healthy Behaviour:** Show your teen how to balance gaming with other activities. Engage in family time, outdoor play, and hobbies together³.

Open communication and understanding are key to fostering a positive approach toward gaming.

As a teacher, there are several strategies you can use to help students play online games responsibly and minimize potential harm:

1.) Calm the Storm and Work Methodically:

i.) Recognize the stages of risk awareness: awareness, panic, acceptance, and action.

ii.) Accept the new reality of remote learning and take action to protect students.

iii.) Create a flexible plan to navigate uncharted waters.

2.) Create a Safe and Secure Digital Space:

i.) Develop clear goals for students' digital lives.



ii.) Decide whether to allow unrestricted access to social media or follow a more structured approach.

iii.) Monitor online activity and limit digital tools/resources to those relevant to the lesson at hand.

3.) Communicate and Collaborate with Students:

i.) Be honest about concerns related to online safety.

ii.) Educate students about the challenges of navigating the digital world.

iii.) Use resources from organizations like Common Sense Media to scaffold discussions¹.

4.) Promote Responsible Use of Video Games:

i.) Make students aware of risks associated with excessive gaming.

ii.) Encourage them to limit playtime to maintain health and focus on schoolwork².

5.) Use Parental Controls:

i) Many online platforms offer parental controls.

ii) Use these to filter out inappropriate content and restrict access to certain features.

iii) Open communication and informed decision-making are key to helping students stay safe while enjoying online games

Balancing online games, study, and family relations can be challenging, but there are effective strategies to help students shift their focus:

1.) Digital Detox and Mindfulness:

i.) Encourage students to take breaks from screens.

ii.) Practice mindfulness techniques to improve focus and reduce distractions¹.

2.) Set Clear Goals and Priorities:

i.) Help students define their academic and personal goals.

ii.) Prioritize tasks and allocate time for study, family, and leisure activities.

3.) Use Educational Games to Enhance Learning:

i.) Leverage digital educational games that align with the curriculum.

ii.) These games can boost motivation and engagement, leading to better learning outcomes.

4.) Parental Involvement and Communication:

i.) Parents can engage in productive conversations about gaming.



ii.) Understand the positive aspects of gaming, such as problem-solving skills and spatial reasoning.

5.) Create a Supportive Digital Environment:

i.) Ensure a conducive study space with minimal distractions.

ii.) Set boundaries for screen time and encourage healthy habits.

Gradual changes and open communication can help students transition from excessive gaming to a balanced lifestyle.

The relationship between online games and social competence:

1.) Social Competence and Online Video Games:

i.) Contrary to the perception that online video game players are socially inept, research disputes this notion.

ii.) Studies have shown that online gaming doesn't necessarily lead to global social incompetence.

Instead, the effects of online game play on skill development and maintenance vary.

2.) Skill Development and Maintenance:

i) Online video games can impact social skills positively or negatively.

ii) Some players develop teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills through online interactions.

However, excessive gaming might lead to neglect of face-to-face social interactions.

3.) Balancing Gaming and Social Life:

i.) Encourage students to set boundaries for gaming time.

ii.) Emphasize the importance of maintaining real-world relationships.

iii) Use educational games that enhance learning while promoting social skills.

Moderation and mindful gaming can help strike a balance between online games and social competence.

Research Findings:

1.A study by Kowert and Oldmeadow (2013) examined the link between online video game involvement and social competence. Surprisingly, the results challenged the notion of widespread social ineptitude among online gamers. While there were unique relationships



between social skills and video game involvement within online gaming populations, they were not as negative as expected.

2. Another study in 2017 found that engagement in massively multiplayer online (MMO) games correlated with a stronger sense of social identity. This social identity was associated with higher self-esteem, greater social competence, and reduced loneliness.

Nuanced Effects:

Online gaming environments can impact social skills, but the outcomes vary. Rather than universally hindering social competence, they may even offer compensatory benefits.

Stereotypical attributions of social ineptitude among online gamers are not always accurate.

In summary, online games can influence social skills, but the effects depend on individual experiences and context

Conclusion: Benefits of Online Gaming: Enhances cognitive skills, problem-solving abilities, and creativity. Provides social interaction and fosters teamwork. Offers stress relief and relaxation. Challenges: Excessive gaming can lead to addiction and health issues. Toxic behaviour in online communities can impact social competency. Social Competency: Refers to the ability to communicate effectively, empathize, and collaborate. Online gaming can improve social skills through teamwork and communication.

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