

Impact of mobile gaming on students

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How to cite this article: Dr. Achom Roshan Kumar (2024). Impact of mobile gaming on students. *Library Progress International*, 44(3), 24749-24751

Abstract

Playing mobile games has become a regular activity for many teenagers today. Playing video games on smartphones, tablets, and PCs has assumed epic proportions recently. This dependence on technology particularly mobile gaming has both its positive and negative influence on students. While playing mobile games helps students improve their communication, problem-solving skills, and creativity it also results in serious physical, mental, social, and emotional health issues.

Keywords: *Social health, Bullying, Problem-solving skills, Mobile game addiction*

Introduction

In the second half of the 20th century, electronic/video games were introduced. Towards the end of this century, the telecommunication revolution that swept all over the world has brought with it a spectacular increase in mobile gaming – playing video games on smartphones and tablets. Gaming on their feature-rich smartphone with anytime-anywhere facilities became the favourite pastime and leisure activity for many teenagers and students irrespective of age, sex, region, and religion. Playing games on mobile phones has certain merits and demerits, which has also been a matter of concern for parents and educators. The objective of the present paper is to dig deeper into mobile gaming habits and the advantages and disadvantages associated with them for the student community.

Review of Literature

Mobile games are video games played online via a mobile device, and are particularly popular when downloaded for free (e.g., “freemium game” – games played for free and where customers can pay for extra features), and can be single-player or multiplayer games (Su et al., 2016). The gaming industry has come a long way from the early arcade video game ‘Blockade’ published by Gremlin Industries in 1976, a precursor of the action game ‘Snake’ included in the Nokia cellular phone in 1998 [“Snake (video game genre),” 2024] to puzzle game such as ‘Tetris’ created in 1985 by soviet engineer Alexey Pajitnov (“Tetris,” 2024). Innovations in mobile games today remove the constraint of time and space, coupled with sharp colour screens, and enhanced sound features that appeal especially to the youth segment, and a significant percentage of teenagers spend much time in a small mobile “living” space (Okazaki et al., 2008).

The mobile gaming market is estimated at USD 100.54 billion in 2024 and is expected to reach USD 164.81 billion by 2029, growing at a CAGR of 10.39% (Mordor Intelligence, 2024). Another report put the figure at USD 102.7 billion in 2024 which is estimated to reach USD 184.8 billion in 2030 with a CAGR of 10.4 % (Prescient & Strategic Intelligence, 2024). These reports also identified North America as the largest mobile gaming market while the fastest-growing market is Asia Pacific. Arora (2023) put the market size of the global gaming industry (including PC, and TV games) in the right perspective with an estimated USD 184.4 billion in 2022 which is greater than the combined global revenue of the music and movie industry which generated USD 26.2 billion and USD 26 billion respectively in 2022.

Studies in different parts of the globe found gaming an increasingly regular phenomenon. The Indian gaming market is currently valued at USD 3.1 billion (Gupta, 2024) which is expected to grow to USD 8.90 billion in the next five years. Gupta (2024) mentioned that India is the second-largest gaming market in the world behind China with 442 million gamers, with approximately 100 million online gamers daily including 90 million paying to play.

Mobile gaming is becoming a major source of entertainment worldwide. Playing video games is seen as offering

stress relief, the experience of working in a team, providing players with a sense of achievement, self-satisfaction, and joy besides being useful for calming down playful kids and entertaining older adults (Fortune Business Insights, 2024). On the other hand, the growing number of children gamers who play video games intensely often turn into addiction which hampers their studies and promotes social anxiety (Fortune Business Insights, 2024).

Objectives of the study

The primary objectives of the study are to identify–

- i) The major advantages of mobile gaming for students
- ii) The major disadvantages of mobile gaming for students

Research method

This descriptive qualitative research is based on library sources and incorporates relevant references from national and international journals, and previous research reports published by government departments, reputed organizations, and CSOs. Secondary data from books, newspapers, magazines, and online sources are also used.

Results and Discussions

Technology increasingly plays a significant role in human society, more so in recent decades where new technologies that are faster, easier, more efficient, cost-effective are being introduced every few months, and older ones becoming obsolete equally fast. Every such technological innovation has both positive and negative effects on the global community and adversely impacts daily lives. Students who constitute the most frequent, regular, and active users of mobile phones and games are continually exposed to numerous benefits as well as challenges.

Positive Impacts

Entertainment and Relaxation: Students find playing mobile games both entertaining as well as relaxing. Mobile gaming enables people to get time out of real life and have fun where they experience a sense of enjoyment and happiness.

Cognitive benefits: A recent study found that students' interaction with mobile video games has certainly impacted the development of their problem-solving skills with researchers finding gains in communication and coordination of students (Sanchez and Salinas, 2008). More than half of the teens who play video games in the (Jeffrey & Olivia, 2004) survey in the US say that it helps them with their problem-solving skills.

Social Interaction: Playing multiplayer online mobile games allows students to interact, socialize, and spend time with others, creating a sense of mobile community. Jeffrey & Olivia (2004) found that 72% of teens who play video games said that a major reason for playing video games is it enables them to spend time with others, while 47% of them said they even made friends online while playing video games.

Negative Impacts

Mobile Game Addiction: Available literature has consistently shown that video game addicts reported more anxiety, and depression and exhibited poorer emotional, physical, mental, and social health (Stockdale & Coyne, 2018). Young adults addicted to video games are found with increased depression and anxiety. A study of Sri Lankan teenagers (Karunanayake et. al., 2020) found that mobile game addiction differs according to the amount of time they play, and the teenagers said mobile gaming negatively affects their academics and physical health while it increases their aggression.

Social Isolation: Mobile game addiction is also found to be associated with loneliness because it has been argued that digital device users spent the most time in online settings, rather than offline, and their existing relationships have suffered as a result (Wang, et.al., 2019). Excessive internet use was found associated with declines in communication with family members, declines in social circles, and an increase in depression and loneliness (Kraut et. al., 1998).

Health Issues: Mobile gaming for prolonged periods at a stretch often results in health problems among students. Jeffrey & Olivia (2004) found that among the US teens who play mobile video games, 41% of them have said that mobile gaming negatively impacts the amount of sleep they get. The same study also reported that 80% of the teens considered harassment or bullying over video games a real issue for people of their age – through offensive names, physical threats, etc. Depression, anxiety, restlessness, fatigue, and red or sore eyes are some common problems of regular mobile gaming teens.

Conclusion

Technological dependence and its consequences cannot be left unattended for it may have far-reaching results.

While mobile gaming plays a productive role in developing the cognitive and social-emotional development of students on one hand, it also makes teenagers sacrifice activities such as homework, sports, family meetings, or social gatherings on the other. Therefore, a delicate balance of mobile gaming along with other important inevitable activities of a normal social life must be maintained. Parents, teachers, elders, and the media could play a major role in this regard.

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