

The Influence of Online Games on the Character Formation of 10th Grade Students

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Abstract:

The widespread use of online games among students is a growing concern due to its potential to influence their character development. Many students spend extensive time playing games, which influences their daily attitudes and behaviors in various ways, both positive and negative. This practical issue emphasizes the importance of conducting comprehensive research to determine how online games influence students' character development, including self-control, discipline, cooperation, responsibility, and honesty. Using a quantitative approach, this study collected data through surveys and questionnaires involving several students as respondents. Data were gathered via questionnaires assessing the intensity of online gaming and various facets of character development. The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of online games on the character development of 10th-grade students at Astra Nawa Vocational High School. This study will clarify the role of online games as an alternative learning medium that can positively shape students' character development if managed properly. The implication of this research is the need for appropriate supervision and training so that the use of online games can support the development of balanced student character development in the educational environment.

Keywords:

character building, education, influence, online game

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INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, technological and internet developments have significantly increased, attracting users from all walks of life, from children and teenagers to adults. This phenomenon is also inseparable from students' active participation as one of the main user groups. Over time, numerous online games have been released on digital platforms, attracting many gamers, mostly teenagers. Besides seeking enjoyment or winning the vaane games they play, they also aim to make friends and interact with fellow online game enthusiasts. The experience starts with either playing online with many friends or playing solo. This can lead players to become interested in, or addicted to, constantly enjoying the game world with its varied atmosphere and challenges (Irawan & Siska W., 2021). The country's net population, as quoted by market research firm e-Marketer, was 83.7 million in 2014. According to these statistics, among internet users who access the internet at least once a month, Indonesia ranks sixth globally (Kominfo, 2014).

The Ministry of Communication and Informatics (2021) reported from JawaPos.com that there are 121.7 million gamers in Indonesia, and this number is projected to increase to 174.1 million in 2022. This rapid growth in the gaming population reflects a significant cultural shift, as more individuals embrace digital entertainment. This trend not only highlights the rising popularity of

gaming but also indicates a burgeoning market for game developers and related industries. As a result, businesses are increasingly focusing on creating localized content and innovative gaming experiences to cater to this expanding audience.

Furthermore, the increasing accessibility of smartphones and the internet has further fueled this gaming boom, allowing a wider demographic to participate. With a diverse range of genres and platforms, the Indonesian gaming industry is poised for even greater expansion in the coming years. This surge in interest presents new opportunities for collaboration and investment within the region's tech landscape. As technology continues to advance, the potential for innovation and creativity in this sector is immense, paving the way for new experiences and opportunities. The increasing accessibility of smartphones and the internet has played a crucial role in this trend, allowing gamers from various backgrounds to connect and engage in diverse gaming experiences. It is projected that there will be 192.1 million players across various platforms by 2025. Smartphones are the most frequently used platform.

Mobile Legends is one of the most played online games in Indonesia. Mobile Legends Bang Bang is the most-played online game in Indonesia, with around 78.74% of players choosing it as their most-played game. MLBB dominates the MOBA category with 5v5 gameplay. Free Fire ranks second among games with widespread access, mainly due to its compatibility with low-spec devices, which helps it reach a wide range of users. PUBG Mobile is also one of the most-played battle royale games, though its user base is smaller than those of MLBB and Free Fire. Other popular and widely accessed games include Genshin Impact, Call of Duty Mobile, Arena of Valor, and Stumble Guys, which offer RPG, FPS, MOBA, and casual party game genres. Trends from 2020 to 2025 show increased access to games that support cross-platform play, live services with regular updates, and user-generated content like Roblox, enriching player choice and numbers (PopGames VIVA, 2025).

Online gaming has two effects on teenage morals, according to research in Malang (2025). Negative effects include a decline in social empathy, a rise in verbal violence, a disregard for moral and religious commitments, and a decrease in conformity to social norms. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2023, 46.2% of kids and teenagers under the age of 18 are addicted to internet gaming, which can lead to behavioral and emotional problems.

Online games can influence students' character, including attitudes and behavior. Online game addiction can cause mental disorders such as irritability, emotional outbursts, and profanity. Furthermore, game addiction can also interfere with academic achievement because playing time reduces study time and reduces children's concentration on schoolwork. Socially, children who are overly immersed in online games can lose real-world social interactions, thereby disrupting students' self-control, character development, cooperation, and problem-solving. In the context of social and cognitive development, online games can have both positive and negative impacts. Positively, collaborative games can support Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), in which children learn more effectively through social interactions with friends or adults. However, on the negative side, excessive gaming can reduce real-world social interactions that are essential for social skills such as cooperation and empathy.

According to modeling and observational learning theory, children imitate the behavior they observe in the media they consume. If online games contain violence, they are likely to imitate it, which can reinforce violent and aggressive traits. Conversely, if online games contain moral messages and cooperation, positive character traits can be developed. Another basis stems from educational theory and developmental psychology, which emphasize the crucial role of parents and the social environment in shaping positive character. Parents must be able to limit and supervise online game use to prevent negative character development.

Child development studies show that traditional games can better support character development, such as honesty, solidarity, and self-confidence, than excessive digital play. Therefore, reviving traditional games could be an effective alternative for character development. Research on online game addiction and students' Islamic character indicates a negative relationship between online game addiction and Islamic character and Islamic Religious Education learning achievement. Games that feature violence and fierce competition can erode tolerance and politeness. Addiction also hinders the formation of Islamic character because excessive time spent playing reduces time for worship and other positive activities.

In general, these theories indicate that the influence of online games on character development is highly dependent on the content, duration of use, parental supervision, and the educational environment. The positive use of digital games must be accompanied by supervision and character development through informal and formal education. This study aims to examine the influence of online games on character development at Astra Nawa Vocational High School, focusing on values such as self-control, discipline, cooperation, responsibility, and honesty. With a more comprehensive understanding, it is hoped that the results of this study will serve as a reference for educators, parents, and policymakers in managing online game use to positively impact student character development.

METHOD

The research approach used in this study is a quantitative method, with data collected through questionnaires. The data were collected directly from respondents using a questionnaire consisting of two parts: one related to online game use and the other to student behavior. The study population consisted of all 10th-grade students at SMK Astra Nawa Sumberejo Ambulu Jember, totaling 40 students. The sampling technique applied in this study is convenience sampling. To ensure sample uniformity, the sample calculation method was used. The population in this study consisted of 40 students from class X of SMK Astra Nawa, and a sample of 37 students was taken. The research instrument used was a questionnaire compiled independently by the researcher and subsequently validated by experts to ensure its suitability and feasibility. After expert validation, the questionnaire was field-tested to assess its feasibility in this research. Based on the field trial results, the questionnaire met the criteria for validity and reliability, making it suitable for use as a research instrument. The data obtained from the questionnaire regarding online game usage will be analyzed using normality tests and the Paired Samples Test.

RESULT

Based on the Paired Samples Test results, the significance value is 0.00, which is smaller than the alpha significance level of 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the number of games played does not significantly influence the formation of students' character. This finding suggests that the frequency or intensity of playing games does not significantly influence students' character development in this research context.

Table 2. Paired Samples Test Result

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig.
				Lower	Upper			
Total Games (Y) - Character Building(X)	-46.811	5.892	.969	-48.775	-44.846	-48.328	36	0.000

Based on the average age of 10th-grade students at SMK Astra Nawa (15-17 years old) and the duration of game playing (less than 1 hour), the results show that there is no influence on students' character formation. This can be concluded based on the results of the normality test and the Paired Samples Test conducted. The results of the questionnaire trial also show that students tend not to like or disagree with the idea that online games shape students' characters. This indicates that addiction to online games does not hinder the formation of students' character.

The interview with the principal reveals a correlation between online games and students' character development. This aligns with what he said when we met him: "So, online games do indeed affect students' personalities because, once they start playing games, they lose themselves in a virtual world, starting from their learning level to their concentration. That's why cell phones are not allowed during school hours: once they hold one, their focus on learning will definitely decrease. Therefore, cell phones are not allowed during class hours; they may be used only during break time. When class hours start, cell phones are collected again. That is one of the solutions because if we want to reduce it completely in the present time, it is difficult, or perhaps not yet possible. But little by little, with this method, as long as it doesn't reduce class hours, they will be able to stop and not be addicted to cell phones" (Shofi, October 27, 2025).

From the interviews with the school principal, it can be concluded that online gaming has the potential to reduce students' concentration in the learning process. This is because students tend to be more interested in playing, which distracts them from learning activities. Therefore, it is recommended that mobile phone use during class hours be restricted by collecting them first, then allowing them to be used again during break time. This policy is expected to reduce the habit of mobile phone use in the school environment, thereby improving students' focus and learning effectiveness during class hours (Husni, October 30, 2025).

DISCUSSION

The research findings on the influence of online games on the character development of tenth-grade students at SMK Astra Nawa indicate that there is no statistically significant effect on student character development. This can be explained by the low level of addiction and excessive interest of students in online gaming activities. Therefore, the use of online games in that context does not have a significant impact on students' character development. Although some students play online games, their personalities during class hours don't clearly change their attitudes, habits, or behavior in their daily lives at school.

This is because students generally still play online games within reasonable limits, manage their time, and continue doing their schoolwork and attending classes in an orderly manner. There was no evidence of severe addiction, such as neglecting studies, frequent absenteeism, or high emotional reactivity due to online gaming. Here, students can distinguish between time for entertainment and time for studying.

The formation of students' character results from the interaction of many factors, including family environment, school, peers, religious education, and socio-cultural values. Therefore, the influence of a single factor, such as online games, is not always significant or directly impactful in character formation. This is also supported by theories that the lack of a direct link between online games and student character development can stem from several critical approaches to the assumption of such a relationship. One theoretical basis for this is that the correlation between online games and student character often yields negative or non-significant results across studies, indicating that although online games are often considered to have a negative influence on character, this relationship is not necessarily causal and may be influenced by other factors.

Media Dependency Theory states that media (including online games) become an important part of daily life and can lead to addiction. However, the impact of media on character does not occur automatically; other contextual factors, such as family environment, education, or students' self-control, mediate it. Therefore, dependence on online games does not necessarily directly lead to significant character changes in the absence of other contributing factors.

Empirical research also shows a negative correlation between online game addiction and students' Islamic character, but this relationship is not a direct cause-and-effect. It is possible that other intervening variables are at play, such as the time spent playing games, rather than the games themselves directly shaping character. In other words, the presence of bad character or a decline in academic performance is more related to addictive behavior toward games than online games themselves.

CONCLUSION

Research on the influence of online games on the character development of 10th-grade students at SMK Astra Nawa showed statistically insignificant results. This is due to the low level of addiction or excessive interest students have in online games. Although some students engage in online gaming, observations of their personalities during class hours indicate that these activities do not significantly affect their attitudes, habits, or behavior in daily life within the school environment. Thus, the use of online games has not yet had a significant impact on students' character development overall.

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