# The Impact of Online Game Application Addiction and Its Implications on Communication Patterns and Self-Management in Children at SMP Muhammadiyah 57 Medan

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| Abstract | This article aims to present data on the impact of online game addiction and its implications for communication and self-management among students at SMP Muhammadiyah 57 Medan. Online games are internet-based games that can be widely accessed by anyone, anywhere. Their presence is now familiar to both children and adults. Along with technological advancements, online games continue to introduce new and engaging features that attract many users. However, excessive use can lead to addiction, which has negative implications for users. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, with data collected through interviews and documentation. The research subjects include five students and one guidance and counseling teacher at SMP Muhammadiyah 57 Medan. The results indicate that online game addiction affects several aspects of students' lives. The impacts include physical health issues due to lack of activity, decreased learning motivation and academic achievement, changes in social interactions, psychological disturbances such as emotional instability, and even financial problems caused by spending money on gaming. Thus, online game addiction is not merely a matter of entertainment, but is closely related to students' self-management—particularly in regulating their time, emotions, and academic responsibilities. |
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology in the digital era has brought significant changes in various aspects of human life, including in education and the social lives of adolescents (Sitorus, Sipahutar, Nasution, Purnama, & Iskandar, 2025). One of the fastest-growing forms of technology is the emergence of various online game applications that can be easily accessed through gadgets, computers, or other digital devices (Iman & Iskandar, 2025). This phenomenon not only provides positive impacts in terms of entertainment and virtual social interaction, but also presents serious challenges in terms of self-management among students.

In Indonesia, the use of online games among school-aged children has increased significantly every year. According to data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association, more than 70% of internet users under the age of 18 spend more than three hours a day playing online games (Aydın, Usta, & Kırımlı, 2023). This condition indicates that gaming has become part of the lifestyle of the younger generation, including junior high school students. However, on the other hand, excessive gaming intensity can lead to addictive behavior, which has implications for students' social, emotional, and academic functioning.

This phenomenon is also observed at SMP Muhammadiyah 57 Medan, where initial observations show that some students exhibit signs of addiction to online games, such as difficulty managing study time, losing focus during learning, and a decline in self-discipline in school activities. Guidance and counseling teachers (BK) and homeroom teachers report behavioral changes in several students who frequently play online games, such as arriving late to school, declining academic performance, and an apathetic attitude towards personal responsibilities. This indicates a close relationship between online game addiction and weak self-management skills in students.

*Self-management* It is the ability of an individual to regulate their thoughts, emotions, time, and behavior so that they align with the goals they want to achieve. For middle school students, this skill becomes an important aspect in the process of character development and independent learning (Utomo & Makhfudli, 2020). When children are unable to manage themselves effectively due to online game addiction, they may experience dysfunction in both academic and social aspects. This addiction can affect their learning motivation, resilience in facing academic pressure, and ability to adapt to the school environment (Iskandar, 2022).

Various previous studies, both at the national and international levels, generally focused on the negative impacts of online games on students' academic performance, social behavior, and mental health. Some studies, such as those conducted by (Taufik, 2023), highlighting how excessive intensity in playing online games can trigger addictive behavior, concentration disorders, as well as a decline in students' academic performance. In Indonesia, research by (Herdiansyah, 2023) also found that online gaming addiction is closely related to decreased learning motivation and increased passive behavior in the school environment.

Nevertheless, a research gap is still evident in the context of the relationship between online game addiction and self-management abilities among adolescents, particularly at the junior high school level. Most previous studies have only highlighted external behavioral aspects such as academic performance, social interactions, and emotional health, without thoroughly examining how online game addiction affects a child's self-management abilities, which include time management, emotional regulation, responsibility, and self-discipline.

Moreover, studies conducted in Islamic school settings, particularly in educational institutions such as SMP Muhammadiyah 57 Medan, are still very limited. In fact, the context of a value-based school like Muhammadiyah has a distinctive approach to character and spiritual development, which can influence how students manage themselves in facing digital technology challenges. Therefore, this research seeks to fill this gap by holistically examining how online game addiction affects students' self-management aspects within an educational environment oriented toward Islamic values and morality.

The novelty of this research lies in two main aspects. First, this study not only examines the impact of online game addiction on behavior or academic achievement but also explores its implications on self-management skills, which are an important foundation for character development and students' independent learning. Thus, this research broadens the understanding of how digital addiction affects children's self-regulation processes in the technological era.

Secondly, this study provides a strong contextual contribution by taking place at SMP Muhammadiyah 57 Medan, where the integration of general education and Islamic values serves as the primary foundation for student development. This approach allows the researcher to explore how factors such as religiosity, counseling guidance, and supervision by teachers and families can serve as protective factors in addressing the impact of online game addiction.

Thus, this study presents a new perspective in the study of digital addiction by closely linking this phenomenon with aspects of self-management and the religious educational environment. The results of this research are expected not only to enrich the scientific literature on online game addiction but also to serve as a basis for developing more contextual, humanistic, and character-building counseling and guidance intervention strategies for students in the digital era.

## 2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type, as it aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of online game application addiction and its implications on students' self-management abilities within certain social and educational contexts. According to (Creswell, 2020), A qualitative approach provides space for researchers to interpret the meaning of subjects' experiences in the context of their real lives, while a case study type allows for an intensive exploration of a particular event or group. This approach is considered most appropriate because the issues studied are contextual, complex, and closely related to the students' subjective experiences in the school environment.

This research was conducted at SMP Muhammadiyah 57 Medan, an educational institution that integrates Islamic values into its learning system. The location was chosen purposively based on initial observations that indicated the presence of online game addiction behaviors among students, as well as

the school's attention to character building and self-control. The research was conducted from April to August 2025, covering the stages of observation, interviews, documentation, and continuous data analysis.

Research informants were determined using purposive sampling techniques, as recommended by (Sugiyono, 2022), namely the selection of informants based on certain considerations that are relevant to the research objectives. The primary informants include students in grades VII and VIII who show tendencies toward online game addiction, guidance and counseling teachers (BK), homeroom teachers, and the school principal. Students are the main focus because they are the age group most vulnerable to digital addiction and are in the stage of developing self-management abilities. Meanwhile, BK teachers, homeroom teachers, and the school principal serve as supporting informants who provide complementary perspectives on student behavior and school development policies.

Data was collected through three main techniques, namely observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to observe students' real behaviors in the school environment, including patterns of social interaction, habits of using gadgets, as well as discipline in participating in learning activities. In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner so that the researcher could explore the experiences, perceptions, and views of both students and teachers regarding the impact of online game addiction (Miles & Saldaña, 2024). Documentation is used to complement field data, such as counseling reports, attendance records, learning outcomes, and extracurricular activity data that are relevant to the management of students' self-development.

Data analysis was conducted using an interactive analysis model (Moleong, 2000), which consists of three main stages: (1) data reduction, which involves organizing and simplifying raw data into meaningful information according to the research focus; (2) data display, arranging the data in the form of descriptive narratives and thematic matrices to identify patterns of relationships between online gaming addiction and self-management abilities; and (3) conclusion drawing and verification, which is the process of interpreting the meaning of the data and testing the consistency of the findings by comparing across sources and methods. This analytical approach is cyclical and is carried out continuously from the beginning to the end of the research.

To ensure the validity of the data, the study applies source and method triangulation techniques. Source triangulation is carried out by comparing interview results from various informants, while method triangulation is done by comparing findings from observations, interviews, and documentation (Creswell, 2020). In addition, member checking was conducted by requesting confirmation from informants regarding the researcher's interpretation results to ensure the accuracy and validity of the data.

From the perspective of research ethics, researchers adhere to the principles of research ethics as

explained by (Sugiyono, 2022), These include respecting the rights of participants, ensuring the confidentiality of identities, and ensuring that the research process does not cause psychological stress for students. Before the research begins, the researcher obtains official permission from the school authorities and requests parental consent from the students who will act as informants.

Through this methodological design, the research is expected to comprehensively illustrate how addiction to online game applications affects the self-management of students at SMP Muhammadiyah 57 Medan, as well as provide an empirical basis for the development of guidance and counseling interventions based on religious values in facing digital challenges in Islamic educational settings.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

**FINDINGS**

**Level and Forms of Online Game Application Addiction among Students of SMP Muhammadiyah 57 Medan**

Observations at SMP Muhammadiyah 57 Medan indicate that the level of online game application addiction among students is quite concerning, particularly in terms of interpersonal communication at school and with family. Some students appear to experience moderate to severe addiction, characterized by excessive gaming, frequently talking about games, and showing exaggerated emotions when prohibited from playing.

The most prominent form of addiction is seen in the use of games such as Mobile Legends, Free Fire, and PUBG Mobile, which encourages students to form limited social groups with communication topics revolving only around games. As a result, the ability to interact with friends outside the gaming community declines, leading to social fragmentation among students. Additionally, students' communication styles also change with the use of game-specific language such as 'push rank' or 'AFK,' which are not always understood by teachers or other peers. Some teachers report having difficulty communicating with students who become passive and less focused due to playing games late into the night.

From a family perspective, students who are addicted tend to interact less with their parents and prefer playing games over having conversations, thereby reducing emotional warmth at home. Overall, online game addiction not only affects learning behavior but also alters students' social and emotional communication patterns. Therefore, an active role from schools through counseling guidance and support from parents is needed to build open and balanced communication.

Based on the results of observations regarding the level and forms of online game addiction among students of SMP Muhammadiyah 57 Medan, in-depth interviews were conducted with three main sources, namely the Guidance and Counseling (BK) teacher, the students' parents, and peers. The

interview results from these three sources showed alignment with the observation findings, particularly concerning the impact of online game addiction on students' behavior and communication patterns in both school and family environments.

Interview with the Guidance and Counseling Teacher (BK)

The school counselor stated that online game addiction has become a phenomenon frequently encountered in the lives of students at SMP Muhammadiyah 57 Medan, especially with the increased use of smartphones. According to him, some students show a decline in learning motivation and their ability to communicate formally in class. The school counselor said:

> *"Children nowadays, when they play games, seem to have their own world. In class, they are mostly quiet, hard to engage in discussions, and often unfocused. When asked, they are more enthusiastic about talking about games than lessons."*

The teacher also added that some students showed changes in social behavior, such as becoming more withdrawn and interacting less with classmates who do not play games, thereby hindering the collaborative learning process in the classroom.

Interview with Students' Parents

The parent of one eighth-grade student revealed that their child's online gaming addiction has affected communication at home and time discipline patterns. They said that their child is often difficult to talk to, especially when playing games.

> *"When playing games, they don't even hear when called. Sometimes they only stop when the battery runs out. They used to like talking about school, but now they are more quiet and busy with their phone."*

The parent also added that communication within the family has become increasingly rigid and distant, as children spend more time online. According to them, uncontrolled use of mobile phones also causes changes in children's sleep patterns and emotions, such as getting easily angered when forbidden to play.

Winterview with a peer

A classmate of one student suspected of being addicted to online games explained that many students now make games the main topic in social interactions. He said:

> *"When we hang out, we always talk about games. Sometimes if someone doesn't understand games, they can't follow along. There are also those who secretly play games on their phones during class."*

This source also reveals that gaming addiction has given rise to new social groups among students, where they interact more intensely with fellow gamers and socialize less with other students. As a result, communication between students becomes limited to certain circles only, while cross-group collaboration in joint learning activities decreases.

From the results of the three interviews, it can be concluded that the level and form of online game addiction among students directly affect interpersonal communication, both at school and at

home. This addiction leads to withdrawing behavior, reduced social empathy, and weakened productive communication skills. Therefore, interventions through school counseling, parental control, and the cultivation of positive communication habits are necessary so that students can balance digital activities with healthy social interactions.

**The Impact of Online Game Addiction on Students' Self-Management Skills**

Observations at SMP Muhammadiyah 57 Medan indicate that online game addiction has a serious impact on students' self-management abilities and affects their communication patterns, both in school and at home. Some students appear to suffer from moderate to severe addiction, characterized by excessive gaming, procrastinating school assignments, and having difficulty focusing on learning.

The most prominent form of addiction is seen in the use of Mobile Legends, Free Fire, and PUBG Mobile, which causes students to communicate more about the gaming world than academic matters. As a result, their social interactions become limited, and some students tend to withdraw from communication with friends or teachers. Classroom communication patterns also become passive, where students find it difficult to express opinions or participate in discussions due to a lack of focus and discipline from playing games late into the night. Furthermore, gaming addiction also affects communication within the family. Addicted students prefer to play games rather than interact with their parents, causing emotional relationships to become strained. When approached for conversation, they often give brief responses or even ignore, indicating a decline in the quality of interpersonal communication at home.

Overall, online game addiction not only reduces students' ability to manage time, control emotions, and maintain responsibility, but also weakens their interpersonal and social communication skills. Therefore, it is necessary for school counselors and parents to take an active role in guiding students to develop self-discipline and foster positive and open communication to restore the balance between the digital world and real life.

Based on the results of observations regarding the impact of online game addiction on students' self-management and communication skills at SMP Muhammadiyah 57 Medan, in-depth interviews were conducted with three main sources, namely the Guidance and Counseling (BK) teacher, students' parents, and peers. The interview results from these three sources showed alignment with the observation findings, particularly concerning how online game addiction affects students' ability to manage themselves and communicate effectively in school and family environments.

Interview with the Guidance and Counseling Teacher (BK)

The school counselor stated that students who are addicted to online games tend to have difficulty managing their study time and show decreased focus in class. According to him, some

students also experience changes in the way they communicate, becoming more withdrawn and passive. The school counselor said:

*"Students who are addicted to games usually arrive late, are often sleepy, and are not prepared to follow the lessons. When spoken to, they give short or unrelated answers because their minds are still focused on the game. It is very difficult to engage them in a discussion."*

He added that this addiction makes students less disciplined and causes them to lose the ability to communicate productively, both with teachers and classmates.

Interview with Students' Parents

Parents of eighth-grade students revealed that their children's addiction to online games has affected communication and discipline at home. They said:

*"Once my child starts playing games, it's hard to get them to study. Sometimes they don't go to sleep until late at night. When I try to talk to them, they answer shortly or while playing on their phone."*

According to him, his child also often shows emotional changes, such as getting angry easily or arguing when prohibited from playing. This causes communication within the family to become cold and deep conversations to occur rarely, unlike before.

Interview with a Peer

A classmate of a student who is addicted to online games explained that the addiction affects social interactions and cooperation at school. He said:

*"Friends who are addicted to games usually have a hard time working in groups. They prefer to talk about games and don't care much about assignments. If scolded, they sometimes get angry."*

He also added that communication among students became unbalanced because most of the time was spent talking about games, rather than academic matters or other school activities.

From the three interview results, it can be concluded that online game addiction directly impacts students' self-management and communication skills. Students become less disciplined, find it difficult to manage their time, and experience a decline in effective communication skills in social and family environments. Therefore, guidance from school counselors, parental guidance, and the development of positive communication at school are needed so that students can balance gaming activities with learning responsibilities and healthy social relationships.

**The Role of School and Family Environment in Addressing the Impact of Online Game Addiction on Students' Self-Management**

Observations at SMP Muhammadiyah 57 Medan indicate that the school and family environments play an important role in addressing the impact of online game addiction on students' self-management abilities, particularly in aspects of time management, discipline, and interpersonal communication. Based on field observations, it appears that the efforts made by the school and family

are still partial and not consistently integrated, so their impact on changes in student behavior has not been optimal.

In the school environment, teachers and the Guidance and Counseling (BK) staff strive to provide support and an educational communication approach to students who show signs of addiction. BK teachers routinely hold individual and group counseling sessions to help students understand the impact of excessive gaming on their academic performance and social life. In addition, teachers play a role in fostering positive communication in the classroom, such as encouraging students to have open discussions about wise use of gadgets and the importance of time management. However, observations indicate that some students are still less responsive to advice because their internal motivation and family support are not strong enough.

Meanwhile, within the family environment, some parents try to limit their children's playtime by setting rules for phone usage and reminding them of the importance of studying. However, communication between parents and children is often ineffective and one-sided, such as bans without explanations or open dialogue. As a result, students feel restricted and instead seek escape by playing games secretly. Some families that have an open communication pattern, where parents listen and engage in dialogue with their children, seem to be more successful in fostering awareness and self-responsibility in children to manage their play and study time.

Overall, the observation results show that synergy between the school and family environments through open, empathetic, and continuous communication is essential to help students cope with the effects of online game addiction. Efforts at guidance are not sufficient with restrictions or punishment alone, but need to be balanced with an interpersonal communication approach that educates and builds students' self-awareness. With the support of both environments, students can learn to manage their time, control their emotions, and gradually improve their self-management skills.

Based on the results of observations regarding the role of the school and family environment in addressing the impact of online game addiction on the self-management of students at SMP Muhammadiyah 57 Medan, in-depth interviews were conducted with three main sources, namely the Guidance and Counseling (BK) teacher, the students' parents, and peers. The interview results showed alignment with the observational findings, particularly in terms of how communication between the school, family, and students plays a key role in the process of controlling excessive gaming behavior.

Interview with the Guidance and Counseling Teacher (BK)

The school counselor explained that the school has been striving to establish active communication between teachers, homeroom teachers, and parents in dealing with students who are addicted to online games. According to him, this collaboration aims to ensure that supervision and guidance for students are more consistent both at home and at school. The school counselor said:

*"We always coordinate with the parents. If there are students who start to daydream often or lose focus because of playing games, we call them in and discuss it together. Sometimes the problem is not just the game, but the lack of communication at home."*

The teacher emphasized that two-way communication between teachers and parents serves as an important means of helping students reorganize their study time, sleep, and play activities. Furthermore, group counseling activities are also used to increase students' awareness of the importance of personal responsibility in time management.

Interview with Students' Parents

A parent of a ninth-grade student stated that the family is trying to improve their communication pattern with the child so that it is not only about reprimanding, but also listening to the child's reasons and needs. They said:

*"I used to often get angry when my child kept playing games. But after the school counselor suggested that we talk more often, I tried to speak to him calmly. Now, before playing, he asks for permission first and can manage his time."*

According to him, a more open and empathetic communication approach helps children become more cooperative and begin to understand the importance of responsibility in managing time for studying, resting, and entertainment.

Interview with a Peer

One of the classmates of students who had experienced online game addiction revealed that peer support and positive communication at school helped the process of behavioral change. He said:

*"We now often remind each other. If someone keeps playing games, we invite them to chat or join school activities so they aren't always on their phones. So we just help each other."*

Peer friends also become an important factor in fostering social awareness and shared responsibility. Through healthy communication among friends, students find it easier to adapt and balance digital activities with real-life activities.

From the three interview results, it can be concluded that communication is a central aspect in the efforts of schools and families to address the impact of online game addiction on students' self-management. Open, empathetic, and continuous communication between teachers, parents, and peers helps students improve self-discipline, manage their time better, and develop social awareness in daily life.

**DISCUSSION**

Research findings at SMP Muhammadiyah 57 Medan indicate that online game addiction has become a phenomenon that significantly impacts students' interpersonal communication and self-

management skills. These findings are in line with various previous studies that confirm that excessive gaming intensity can disrupt adolescents' social, emotional, and academic functioning.

According to (Salsabillah, Hendra, & Deson, 2022), Online game addiction produces symptoms similar to other behavioral addictions, such as loss of control, interpersonal conflicts, and neglect of social responsibilities. This is evident in students of SMP Muhammadiyah 57 Medan, who experience decreased focus on studying, difficulty communicating formally in class, and display emotional dependence on online games.

Research (Shimil & Srivastava, 2022) It also highlights that a common form of addiction among teenagers is characterized by increased gaming time, the emergence of terms or linguistic styles typical of the gaming community, and the formation of exclusive social groups based on interest in certain games. This phenomenon was also observed in schools, where students formed communication groups limited only to game-related topics such as Mobile Legends or Free Fire, leading to social fragmentation and a decline in cross-group communication skills.

From a psychosocial perspective, (Berloffa, et al., 2022) emphasizing that internet and game addiction can reduce a person's social competence due to increased one-way and impulsive communication. This is in line with the findings from observations and interviews with the guidance counselors at SMP Muhammadiyah 57 Medan, which revealed that some students become passive and less able to express their opinions effectively. As a result, communication between students and teachers becomes unproductive, while emotional warmth in family relationships also decreases.

In addition to affecting interpersonal communication, online game addiction also disrupts students' self-management abilities. The results of this study are in line with the findings (Siregar & Metia, 2025), which states that online gaming addiction hinders teenagers' ability to manage time, set priorities, and control emotional impulses. This condition is clearly seen in students who postpone school assignments, play until late at night, and exhibit undisciplined behavior.

Meanwhile, from the perspective of family communication, (Wahyudi & Maulida, 2022) It was found that the quality of communication between parents and children is a major protective factor in overcoming digital addiction. Parents who practice open, empathetic, and dialogical communication are better able to help children develop self-awareness and responsibility in managing playtime. This finding is reflected in interviews with parents, where a more communicative and non-authoritarian approach was shown to help children become more disciplined and receptive to advice.

In the context of school, (Kakisina, Priastana, & Kusumaningtiyas, 2023) It emphasizes the importance of the role of Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers in building supportive communication oriented towards developing students' self-control. BK teachers at SMP Muhammadiyah 57 Medan have attempted to do this through individual and group counseling

sessions, as well as actively communicating with parents to instill awareness about the dangers of game addiction. However, its effectiveness still depends on the involvement of families and social environments that consistently support changes in student behavior.

In addition, support from peers has also been shown to influence the control of game addiction. (Oktavia, Sugiyo, & Awalya, 2021) It explains that adolescents tend to change their behavior more easily if they receive social support from friends who have positive communication patterns. This aligns with the results of field interviews, where peers act as reminders and motivators to shift attention from games to productive activities at school.

Thus, the results of this study confirm that interpersonal communication, whether in school, family, or among peers, plays a key role in overcoming the impact of online game addiction on students' self-management. Dialogic, open, and empathetic communication patterns are able to foster reflective awareness in students to balance the digital world and real life.

Theoretically, the results of this study reinforce the theories of interpersonal communication and self-regulation proposed by (Shabrina & Rosyidi, 2022), That a person's behavior is shaped through social interactions that mutually influence the individual, the environment, and cognition. In this context, communication becomes the main means for students to learn to manage their behavior and time.

Practically, schools and families need to build a continuous educational communication synergy. Guidance counselors can develop counseling programs based on digital awareness and emotional regulation, while parents need to adopt a more participatory and empathetic communication approach. This approach is believed to help students build healthy self-management and improve the balance between digital activities and productive social life.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research at SMP Muhammadiyah 57 Medan, it can be concluded that addiction to online game applications has a significant impact on students' self-management abilities and communication patterns both at school and at home. Students who are addicted tend to be less disciplined, have difficulty managing their time, experience reduced learning focus, and exhibit passive and closed communication with teachers, peers, and parents. The school and family environments play an important role in addressing these impacts, particularly through open, empathetic, and continuous communication patterns between guidance counselors, parents, and peers. The implications of this research emphasize the importance of collaborative communication between schools and families in fostering digital awareness and self-discipline among students. Schools need to strengthen the role of counseling guidance based on educational communication, while parents need to develop two-way

communication that supports children's self-control. The weakness of this study lies in the limited scope of the location and the absence of quantitative measurements of addiction levels and self-management abilities. Therefore, future research is recommended to use a mixed-methods approach and involve more schools to obtain more comprehensive results and to develop a preventive communication model in addressing online game addiction among students.

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