




# Exploring the Psychological Indicators of Online Gaming Dependency in Teenagers

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E d i t o r	R e v i e w e r s
Sergii Boltivets <sup>1</sup>  Chief Researcher of the Department of Scientific Support of Social Formation of Youth. Mykhailo Drahomanov University, Ukraine sboltivets@ukr.net	<b>Reviewer 1:</b> Faranak Saboonchi <sup>1</sup>  Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Payam Noor University, Tehran, Iran. Email: faranaksaboonchi@pnu.ac.ir <b>Reviewer 2:</b> Maasoumeh Behboodi <sup>1</sup>  Assistant Professor, Counseling Department, Roudehen Branch, Islamic Azad University, Roudehen, Iran. Email: masomehbehbodi@riau.ac.ir

## 1. Round 1

### 1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

This opening paragraph appears to discuss emotional exhaustion and family conflict, which seem conceptually unrelated to online gaming dependency. The reviewer suggests revising or clarifying whether this introductory section was included erroneously or is meant as theoretical background connecting emotional exhaustion to gaming behavior.

The design description is solid, but it would benefit from explicit mention of epistemological positioning—for instance, interpretivism versus phenomenology. Clarify whether Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis was used within a constructivist framework.

Excellent use of direct quotation; however, consider integrating psychological theory—such as self-discrepancy theory or illusory competence—to enrich analysis of the “illusion of mastery” subtheme.

This section would benefit from clearer differentiation between healthy online socialization and pathological social substitution. The reviewer suggests introducing theoretical support from social identity theory or belongingness hypothesis.

The paragraph effectively demonstrates behavioral dependence. However, you could strengthen interpretation by referencing diagnostic criteria (e.g., WHO ICD-11 Gaming Disorder symptoms) to align qualitative evidence with established clinical frameworks.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

## 1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The stress–strain discussion is rich but diverges from gaming-related constructs. If retained, the authors should clearly state how emotional exhaustion theory provides a conceptual scaffold for understanding gaming dependency—perhaps by framing gaming as a maladaptive stress-coping strategy.

There is a structural discontinuity between the family-conflict discussion (paragraphs 1–12) and the final sentence (“Accordingly, the present qualitative study aims to explore and identify the core dimensions of emotional exhaustion among adolescents experiencing family conflict in Indonesia”). This statement conflicts with the study’s stated title and methods (Greek adolescents, gaming dependency). Please reconcile or correct this mismatch.

Please specify inclusion and exclusion criteria more precisely. Did “regular engagement” mean daily gaming, or a minimum number of hours per week? Defining thresholds would improve replicability.

The context of data collection (school, online) is described but lacks cultural and ethical justification for involving minors. The reviewer recommends expanding the ethical procedures paragraph to include Institutional Review Board approval number or local ethics committee authorization.

While the six steps are enumerated, it would improve methodological rigor to include an example of coding progression—for instance, how an initial code like “escaping real-life problems” evolved into the final theme “Emotional Regulation through Gaming.”

Table 1 presents themes, subthemes, and open codes effectively. However, consider adding frequency indicators or participant counts (e.g.,  $n = 14/19$  endorsed escapism) to strengthen analytic transparency and show thematic saturation quantitatively.

The narrative quotations are evocative but need analytic linkage. Explicitly interpret what this quote exemplifies—e.g., avoidance coping or affective regulation failure—rather than leaving interpretation implicit.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

## 2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.