

From Traditional Playgrounds to Screens in Algerian Society: A Psychological Analysis of Interactive Video Game Addiction Among Children and Adolescents

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Abstract:

Algerian societies have transformed their traditional neighborhood games into interactive electronic games which provided both social and cooperative learning opportunities. Digital games deliver entertainment and mental stimulation but simultaneously create psychological hazards which lead to addictive behavior. The virtual world attracts children and teenagers by providing them with escape from boredom and loneliness and also helps them overcome shyness or low self-esteem. Virtual accomplishments deliver feelings of competence which they lack in their actual lives thus increasing their social detachment and decreasing their self-esteem. The situation demands immediate action to build psychological literacy throughout social institutions starting with families who must establish dialogue and implement purposeful real-world activities which defend youth against digital dependency.

**Keywords:** Traditional games; Interactive electronic games; Digital addiction; Psychological literacy; Child; Adolescent.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Social problems together with psychological phenomena naturally exist within society as they both influence and emerge from it. Every society possesses its unique set of problems which closely connect to its social characteristics and development level. New socio-psychological phenomena persistently appear in society to both disrupt social structures and confuse its members.

Experts need to study these recent phenomena at regular intervals while displaying them in scientific and academic formats and spreading psychological understanding about them across all social contexts.

The characteristics of each society and its developmental phase determine the variations in these phenomena. Such changes become extremely dangerous when societies lack appropriate readiness to face them. Human progress through internet advancements and digital communication tools has brought substantial improvements in both scale and quality across multiple domains yet these tools produce harmful effects when people use them improperly.

The main users being children and adolescents makes it challenging to know the outcome of their exploratory behavior and time-wasting activities.

### **Problem Statement**

Children and adolescents possess a fundamental need for play which drives them to discover games that let them express their emotions and enjoy the benefits of play including fun and energy release.

Childhood play emerges naturally from within children while resisting external control to produce feelings of happiness alongside psychological relaxation. Play aids cognitive growth by developing children's imaginative abilities and helping them form mental images of their surroundings.

Play stands as a fundamental element in Jean Piaget's conceptualization of cognitive development. According to Piaget, motor activities performed by children establish essential bases that drive their intellectual development. Piaget recognized that mental development and maturation require play because it includes symbolic representation and depends on imaginative rehearsal and mental imagery and drawing and shaping.

The child develops mentally through spontaneous environmental interactions which transform their biological nature into a rational psychological being via progressive activity engagement (Mohammad Mahmoud Al-Khawaldeh, 2003, p. 39).

The perspectives of Sigmund Freud about play differed from the views of Piaget regarding intelligence development. According to Freud play functions as a mental process through which children demonstrate their desires while practicing conflicts and distressing experiences to achieve control over them. According to Freud play functions as an evaluation tool for personality assessment since it exposes hidden inner characteristics together with motivational factors.

Play serves a dual purpose according to him because it functions as a healing method to treat mental problems in children through their natural play experiences instead of traditional adult methods. Through play children find an emotional outlet and develop a method to express themselves while observers gain insight into their inner world (Susanna Miller, 1987, p. 26).

Both Melanie Klein and Anna Freud integrated this method into their psychoanalytic practice yet they used play therapy differently. Melanie Klein applied play therapy in place of free association for adult psychoanalysis where she analyzed child play to discover hidden unconscious material (Melanie Klein & John River, 1993). The primary function of play therapy according to Anna Freud was to establish trust between the therapist and child before moving toward free association through verbal therapy. Anna Freud regarded play

therapy as a preparatory function which she used less extensively than Klein who made it a core part of her therapeutic approach.

The term "profession" for children establishes their role as small-scale professional workers. Groos and other experts in *The Play of Man* explain that children play to prepare for future tasks which demands serious attention. Throughout history working-class and urban children developed their own basic games which naturally appeared from their environment. The games existed outdoors in streets, alleys and courtyards where children transformed their minimal resources into imaginative play activities. Through play children released their creative energy in unplanned spontaneous ways that allowed them to express themselves.

Neighborhoods of the past produced lively social interactions between children whose activities followed strict age and gender divisions. Young girls gathered on house-front mats to play with their handmade dolls and jump rope while drawing hopscotch patterns on the ground. The boys would come together with excitement to create soccer balls from plastic bags which they used for their games while pushing their homemade wheeled toys made from metal wires.

These scenes have become increasingly rare. Children today meet exclusively to play with store-bought soccer balls in purpose-built playgrounds which exist inside both public and private residential parks that feature swing sets and climbing equipment and slides.

Urban growth along with environmental development stemming from multiple undisclosed causes has transformed community authority into individual control. The child responsibility now belongs exclusively to parents since neighbors and extended family members no longer participate as they did in previous times. Street safety issues including traffic dangers together with rising crime rates prevent children from playing outside except when supervised by adults within sight which confines their outdoor play to supervised visits between indoor playtime.

The internet and audiovisual technology advancements have generated a new generation which demonstrates both competence and dependence on digital platforms. Play functions as an essential element of childhood because it drives cognitive growth while enabling children to express their needs and conflicts.

We were prompted by several questions:

- How can the phenomenon of interactive electronic game addiction among children and adolescents in Algerian society be understood psychologically, especially given the shift from
- traditional physical play spaces to virtual environments?
- What are the main psychological and behavioral signs of addiction in a child or adolescent?
- What are the key characteristics of the psychological profile of children and adolescents addicted to electronic games?
- What are the most effective preventive measures to address this issue, particularly within family, school, and community settings?

## **2. Literature Review:**

### **2.1 Traditional Games and Digital Development**

Traditional games represent essential cultural elements which make up the fundamental heritage of societies. The informal method of passing these games from one generation to another allows children and youth to engage in physical and mental activities. The main purpose of these games is to entertain people while providing relief from boredom because they have basic rules and competitive elements (Mahmoud Ghassan Nimer Al-Hajj Saleh, 2016). According to (Johan Huizinga, 1955) traditional games serve as powerful cultural transmitters which maintain the customs of society while they exist before cultural development. The tradition exists as a social custom

which continues through successive generations without regard to what adults think. Such activities occur in outdoor locations along with different types of places (Al-Anani, 2018, p. 274). The fundamental concept needs protection since these games function as cultural transmission tools between different generations. These activities help children develop leadership abilities and teamwork skills and they facilitate learning and knowledge acquisition and they introduce scientific concepts and intellectual growth and physical development and social and psychological growth. These activities occur within defined geographical boundaries which exist in physical real-world environments.

Traditional neighborhood games along with electronic digital games have existed in Algerian society to shape the daily activities of children and adolescents. These games serve as essential tools for socialization while helping develop personalities in the youth of Algerian society.

Residents from previous generations remember how they established their neighborhood games by using ropes to jump while they created chalk drawings of squares and rectangles and played cap games and stone tossing. The distinguishing feature of these youth was their dependence on self-created playthings which they made from accessible materials by combining recycling with artistic ingenuity during their recreational time, The parents now doubt which electronic entertainment their children truly enjoy because these games exist in a virtual realm shaped by consumer culture and passive usage of technology.

The Algerian society faces a quick pace of change because of the digital revolution that requires it to adapt accordingly. The way people play and enjoy their leisure time is shifting but certain traditional interactive activities continue to resist technological dominance. The ongoing changes require deep analysis to achieve equilibrium between their advantages and negative effects while developing health awareness and social consciousness that defends youth from digital addiction and online game overuse.

### **3. Internet-Based Electronic Game Addiction**

The development of audiovisual technology has driven scientific study yet this research investigates electronic game addiction specifically through online video game play. Online games have gained substantial popularity during recent years thus researchers are dedicating increased attention to their addictive nature which requires detailed study within the Algerian environment.

The research seeks to determine both the causes and results of addiction among children and adolescents and adults with the aim to create suitable treatments that minimize its adverse effects. Psychological awareness serves as both the research target and final result which this study seeks to achieve.

All types of electronic games including those distributed through CDs or internet downloads or played through computers tablets or smartphones attract players from every demographic including children and adults and both genders. The entertainment industry now includes electronic games as one of its most popular choices. The widespread enjoyment of electronic games has produced various social problems which include decreased social connections with family members and friends and academic failure alongside game addiction and suicide cases. National and international statistics show that child suicides have frequently stemmed from electronic game addiction which includes dangerous content. This represents a contemporary social challenge which demands immediate attention.

#### **3.1 Addiction**

Addiction refers to a condition which makes people perform activities or behaviors for psychological comfort despite adverse outcomes. People with addiction are unable to stop engaging in their chosen behavior while they require more involvement which damages their personal life. Addiction manifests through extreme focus on particular activities which

cause destructive effects to personal health and mental condition and overall wellness (Jawad Fatair, 2001).

Addiction exists beyond substance abuse and includes problems with food addiction and internet addiction. The new millennium introduced youth addictions which spread openly with official awareness and guardian permission such as internet addiction and video game addiction. This research investigates behavioral addictions as its central subject.

The primary distinction between substance addiction and video game addiction lies in the lack of physical substance since video game addicts do not use tangible materials but drug addicts use actual substances.

### **3.2 Interactive Electronic Games**

Internet-based interactive games maintain their status as the leading choice among electronic game players because they deliver superior entertainment value. Online gaming platforms enable thousands of users to simultaneously join and interact with children and adolescents who make up the majority of participants.

The player has command over various game features that include tasks, attributes, abilities and interactions with other players. Users can access multiple game features to create particular in-game elements and interact with other players via chat or combat functionalities. The different game modes determine why players choose to engage with these games. Players discover virtual worlds which match their personality profile while offering relief from everyday stress (Kimberly Young, 2014, p. 99).

### **4. Distinction Between Interactive Games and Traditional Electronic Games**

Traditional games served as an essential part of children's daily routines before modern technology became prevalent. Their diminished popularity occurred after the introduction of mobile phones and tablets. Traditional games produce distinctive psychological and social and physical effects on children when compared to electronic games. The open real-world environment of traditional games enables players to develop

social interaction abilities together with peer problem-solving and teamwork skills. These games combine physical movement with play which produces beneficial effects on mental health and physical health and reduces obesity risks.

Electronic games which are interactive mainly target cognitive functions while enhancing strategic thinking abilities and reaction speed. These games rank among the most entertaining yet they create strong addictive tendencies in their players. Their social aspect sets them apart; while individual play is possible, it is generally discouraged. Players need to participate in various gaming communities which leads to numerous social connections within virtual environments. The game serves as an online chat platform which allows players to extend their playtime through group membership. The practice of deep immersion within gameplay causes children and adolescents to abandon routine responsibilities. The excessive virtual world attachment frequently triggers anxiety along with mood disorders because of addiction to this engagement.

#### **4.1 The Avatar Character in Electronic Games**

Online games represent one of the internet's primary applications because they allow players to interact through virtual characters that they call avatars in virtual worlds. Children select their game avatars to modify their appearance and clothing while programming movements and dances between game levels.

The emotional and mental connection between children and adolescents and their virtual avatars develops from their identification with these characters. Through this connection users learn to transfer their needs and emotions to the avatar when they encounter external obstacles which could be social exclusion or low self-esteem. People who experience limited control in their life find empowerment and accomplishment through their virtual character. Users create their avatar from scratch which makes it an idealized representation of their self-image and its visual aspects reflect either their current self-image

or the self-image they want to achieve. The personal customization of the avatar strengthens the emotional connection between players and their virtual characters.

Video games and internet-based games primarily serve as entertainment platforms which generate numerous beneficial effects according to (Marie-Valérie Valleur & Christian Boucher, 2006). These games help users develop creative skills while improving their decision abilities as well as enhancing their cognitive functions and hand-eye coordination.

Video games create situations where players develop emotional bonds which transform into addictive behaviors that make them feel anxious and tense. The dependency emerges from captivating storylines that drive children to remain connected for discovering events beyond level completion. The rising difficulty levels trigger more dopamine production which functions as both a pleasure hormone and an addiction-related substance.

The impact becomes particularly intense because game designers purposefully create reward systems that include points alongside tools for loss prevention and new items to boost player engagement.

Online video games function as an intermediary space which psychoanalytic theory describes as a transitional zone. The virtual world shares similarities with the transitional space according to Fragier and Faur who study this connection at the boundary of physical and psychological dimensions (Hubert Lisandre & Sylvain Missonnier, 2003, p. 49).

Virtual environments allow users to experience fantasies without any boundaries while remaining free from possible negative outcomes. Protecting oneself from the effects of revealing personal information or demonstrating inner concepts requires hiding one's real identity. Through this medium people can express hidden conflicts which would otherwise remain suppressed because their identity remains anonymous. Through social interactions with others people can discharge their repressed emotions and sexual feelings and social inhibitions and forbidden desires and anxieties (Salwa Hassan, 2022).

People use online electronic games to project themselves and to move backward into earlier psychological states. The emotional release which players experience from virtual reality carries an addiction potential because they might start viewing it as authentic reality. Kimberly Young introduced the phrase "Internet addiction" during her psychological research of this phenomenon in the United States during 1994 (Kimberly Young, 2006).

## **5. Addiction to Online Electronic Games**

Online electronic games rank as one of the most frequently used internet applications because users play in digital environments.

The medical community currently recognizes continuous gaming as a psychological disorder which involves an uncontrollable need to play these games. The medical community has not yet included this condition as an official disorder. The field of video game addiction research includes Mark Griffiths and Tejeiro R.A. and Bersabé Marón and Bruno Rocher who study this condition by analyzing player behaviors that become repetitive and compulsive.

The French National Academy of Medicine which was founded in 1820 as a scientific medical organization recommended in 2012 to use "excessive use of electronic games" as the preferred term instead of "video game addiction" because it proved less stigmatizing towards gaming enthusiasts.

The World Health Organization (WHO) identifies video game attachment as a disorder which it classifies as "gaming disorder" in its 11th revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11). WHO had identified video game addiction as a separate disorder several years back but did not create formal diagnostic standards or treatment guidelines at that time.

During 2019 medical professionals documented the initial clinical hospitalization of teenage patients because of their video game addiction. Previous reports of similar cases involved players who were adults rather than teenagers.

According to WHO an individual becomes addicted to electronic games when they cannot manage their gaming behaviors including how often they play as well as how long and how intensely they game. Gaming becomes addictive when it dominates every other part of life and people play behind screens despite experiencing significant adverse effects.

For example, in 2005, according to the BBC, a young man in South Korea who earned approximately \$100,000 annually from electronic gaming died after playing *StarCraft* online against multiple opponents for 50 continuous hours, taking only very brief breaks. He suddenly collapsed in his chair, and his heart stopped.

The news from India reveals that a 16-year-old teenager passed away because he played PUBG without stopping for six hours. His heart failed due to overwhelming emotional stress which occurred when he lost the game.

The Guardian disclosed a tragic incident from 2010 when a Korean couple forgot about feeding their infant daughter because they were intensely focused on an electronic game. The parents faced criminal charges for neglect and involuntary manslaughter after their daughter died from starvation.

### **5.1 Young Players and the Development of Addiction**

Certain elements of screen-based play serve as factors that promote addiction. To develop awareness about this phenomenon we need to understand its fundamental causes. Behavioral understanding in clinical psychology depends fundamentally on the questions "how?" and "why?".

The experience of computer gaming brings a variety of emotions to players as they work to complete levels and reach victory. Young players should not be underestimated

because the powerful emotions these games generate often lead them to play repeatedly for emotional re-experiences.

The activity of play enables young players to find refuge from reality through virtual worlds especially if they have social anxiety or psychological weaknesses. The virtual world enables users to create relationships while achieving achievements and adopting identities which proves simpler than establishing these connections and accomplishments in real life. The digital world through video games enables youth to bypass real-world limitations by entering a digital space where they can select whichever identity they desire.

Electronic games present a disadvantage for young players because they lack real-world experience when competing against experienced programmers and companies who specialize in software development and marketing. The companies implement methodical approaches to keep their users interested by preventing boredom through adding new characters and levels while regularly updating games and running cash tournaments for top players. These incentives drive players to dedicate substantial time toward skill improvement similar to Olympic athletes who train for their competitions.

Online games that operate in real time across the internet enable players of all ages to build teams through virtual connections without physical interaction. Team members who work together to achieve victory develop deep bonds of loyalty between themselves. The desire to achieve status within the virtual community leads players to dedicate extended time to gaming.

The situation becomes worse because parents do not understand the dangers associated with electronic games that contain inappropriate content. The main contributors to this problem include parents who allow their children to play without restrictions while also displaying their technological abilities but fail to set proper boundaries. Many parents who understand these issues choose to ignore them because their busy lives and modern-

day stress prevent them from dealing with conflict. The absence of alternative activities and vacuum periods leads parents to allow their children to spend extended periods online. Mary Wynne and other experts have explained that children who receive insufficient attention from their parents often seek alternative activities like television viewing which now extends to internet usage (Marie Wynne, 1999, p. 23).

## **5.2 Diagnosis of Video Game Addiction**

The diagnostic criteria for Internet addiction developed by Griffiths apply to interactive video game addiction according to (Kimberly Young, 2014, p. 104). Griffiths established various diagnostic markers which help identify online gaming addiction among people:

- Salience: Video games become the primary focus of a person's existence because they occupy the forefront of their thoughts while leading to basic need neglect such as eating and sleeping.
- Mood Modification: Video game play induces strong emotional reactions in people who use games to alter their mood states.
- Tolerance: Increased gameplay requirements become necessary to achieve previous psychological outcomes while users develop resistance toward original stimuli.
- Withdrawal Symptoms: Negative feelings, social withdrawal, being more sensitive when not gaming, and difficulty finding other activities when games aren't available.

Most withdrawal symptoms emerge after players leave their online games in the real world. Some experts suggest that online interactive games resemble social interactions because they share many characteristics. Playing these games does not necessarily lead to social isolation. The social groups which players create within gaming platforms serve as a motivation for participants to continue their gameplay. The process of identifying online friendships versus in-person relationships leads to numerous social factors that cause actual-world isolation. The majority of game players maintain two distinct realities which include

the actual world and the digital world. People who focus more on the virtual world instead of reality face an increased danger of developing addiction and social detachment from real-life experiences.

- Conflict: Family members and individuals fight over continued screen use because it leads to work or study neglect. Electronic games represent the primary source of parental anxiety about their children according to most parents. Electronic games dominate children's rooms throughout homes yet they consume most of their free time which stops them from engaging in natural physical activities. Real-life communication becomes impossible leading to social detachment from actual human interactions. Children who spend excessive time online develop social withdrawal characteristics that result in quiet behavior and social weakness and physical deterioration which leaves their connections solely in virtual spaces.
- Relapse: The pattern of going back to compulsive video game playing happens after periods of voluntary game abstaining.

In the 11th revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11), issued on January 1, 2022, the diagnostic criteria for video game addiction include the following:

- Loss or diminished control over gaming behavior (frequency, continuity, intensity, duration, context, etc.).
- Increasing priority given to gaming to the extent that it overshadows all other life goals and daily activities.
- Continuation of gaming despite severe and adverse consequences.

This behavioral pattern must be continuous or episodic and recurrent over a period of 12 months to warrant a diagnosis (World Health Organization, 2022).

Internet addicts, including gaming addicts, often form emotional attachments with online friends and fellow players. They use internet services to meet new people. These

online communities offer an escape from reality and help fulfill psychological and emotional needs unmet in their real lives.

### **5.3 Psychological Profile Most Susceptible to Internet-Based Electronic Game Addiction**

Research shows that people who deal with depression and those who recover from addiction along with those who experience boredom or social disorder and fear of social interaction face increased risks of becoming addicted to online games (Sawaleha, 2007, p. 120). Researchers link this vulnerability mainly to the mental state which individuals possess.

The research distinguishes between addiction which emerges from personal traits versus addiction which develops through the intrinsic appeal of games. Research on this topic identifies two major elements that contribute to addiction which include low self-esteem and weak self-efficacy.

The primary factor for developing online interactive game addiction involves low self-esteem. Bessier et al. (2007) investigated this matter by analyzing how subjects evaluated their genuine self-image against their ideal self and the game elements. The research demonstrated that users assessed the game elements with less favorability compared to their ideal self-image which demonstrated how low self-esteem contributed to addiction development.

People with strong self-esteem experience smaller gaps between their self-image and game attributes yet people with weak self-esteem detect these discrepancies. The same pattern applies to the ideal self. Interactive game addiction among adolescents is strongly influenced by self-efficacy according to Van and colleagues in their research (Youg, 2014, p. 109).

Participants in these games typically state that their gameplay stems from enjoyment and experimentation. The unconscious use of these games allows users to present themselves as more skilled than their real-life abilities. The psychoanalytic framework

explains video game addiction through Van et al.'s specific psychological mechanism which shows how these games bring deep happiness to players. The 18-year-old player who spent 18 hours daily on video games to address self-esteem and social problems was described by Alison and others (2006) through a similar psychological pattern. The player selected the game *Summer Can Revive the Dead* because he believed it would serve as his social compensation. He achieved success inside the game world even though he experienced social anxiety but he failed to demonstrate authentic self-efficacy when trying to apply game success to real-world social interactions (Kimberly Young, 2014).

The strong attraction of computer games along with internet and mobile phone gaming presents serious risks that lead to addiction concerns. The situation requires enhanced psychological understanding along with proactive guidance and counseling and preventive actions before treatment needs to be considered. The next sections will present electronic game addiction prevention methods together with therapeutic intervention approaches.

## **6. Prevention of Electronic Game Addiction Among Children and Adolescents Through the Cultivation of Psychological Awareness**

The solution to electronic game addiction among young people requires society to develop psychological awareness. Game companies who focus on commercial success place their interests above the welfare of their consumers thus the culture must first reach parents. Families together with parents bear the main duty for prevention. The prevention approach needs to base itself on specialist knowledge about these developing issues which should form the foundation of awareness programs.

Social institutions should develop educational sessions which help parents understand new Internet platforms and their applications. Parents will gain the necessary skills to lead their children effectively through digital activities. The responsibility of parents

includes both time restrictions and content supervision for their children's gaming activities as well as knowledge of game types and titles.

Families need to create meaningful communication about children's activities including computer games. Parents need to be with their children during these activities to both understand the situation and take action if needed. Parents need to find alternative activities for their children which provide authentic real-world experiences that decrease electronic game dependency that can result in addiction.

Parents need to provide their children direct access to real-life achievements which lead to genuine happiness while teaching them non-digital coping methods. It is beneficial to support children through their participation in conventional hand-operated cultural activities which enhance their intellectual abilities and creative potential along with physical coordination.

To protect their children digital environments parents should implement available protective tools through the installation of parental control software and monitoring programs on computers tablets and smartphones.

## **7. Conclusion**

Digital technology advancements in Algerian society have created a notable shift in the way children and adolescents engage with play activities. The transition from conventional popular games to electronic interactive games has occurred rapidly because of modifications in socialization methods and social interaction patterns. The current generation demonstrates technical proficiency with digital technologies yet they encounter dangers of becoming addicted while losing touch with reality. The situation demonstrates the immediate necessity to activate family and community roles which promote appropriate and balanced use of these recreational technologies.

It is vital to restore protected areas for conventional games and substitute activities because this action will improve both psychological and social health of children and

adolescents. Technology will serve its developmental purpose when used as a tool instead of becoming a source of psychological or social issues.

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