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Online Gaming and Students' Academic Performance in Nepal: Towards Sustainable Development of Digital Educational Games for Students

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to explore a connection between the online game addiction and academic achievement among the secondary school level students in Nepal. As the digital gaming has expanded, there are some questions of its possible effects on the students' learning due to their behavioral outcomes. A quantitative and descriptive-correlational design was utilized in this study whereby 120 secondary students were sampled from the public and private schools in Pokhara Metropolitan City for data collection. Statistical tests, such as descriptive statistics, the Pearson correlation and multiple regression were performed in SPSS. The findings showed a negative significant relationship between the online gaming addiction and academic achievement of students whereby higher the gaming addiction scores, the lower the grade point average (GPA) and the lower the attendance of classes among students. These results demonstrate the negative academic consequences of gaming addiction and underline the significance of moderate digital activity and parental controls and school-based interventions. The empirical data presented in the study is a contribution to the expanding body of literature on the topic of behavioral addiction, offering few solutions to encourage the responsible digital behavior among teenagers. Finally, the findings highlight the urgent need for awareness, digital literacy, and counseling programs promoting the balanced technology use in schools.

KEYWORDS: Digital addiction, academic performance, digital literacy, behavioral addiction

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INTRODUCTION

The online gaming addiction is becoming a developing issue in the world, especially among teenagers. Daily gaming has become a common activity for several

students with the growing availability of internet and involving apps, smartphones, and other interactive online platforms. Though a regular gaming may result in entertainment, creativity and socialization, the excessive gaming usually results in addiction; students become the victims of their obsession with gaming, they lose control and fail to attend school or their social lives. This change in behavior has brought about some serious issues among educators and parents as to whether it can affect the academic performance and psychological well-being of students. Therefore, this online gaming culture has transformed the young people into interacting and spending time with their family and friends, replacing the traditional outdoor games that promote the teamwork, physical activity, and time management. Moreover, the accessibility of smartphones with internet allows students to play anytime and anywhere. Based on 12 years of experience in teaching, this study was motivated by observing students shifting from the physical activities to the excessive online gaming, which affect their health and academic performance.

It has been proved by the numerous researchers that the online gaming addiction has the adverse impacts on the academic performance of students. Students who are addicted have the problems with their time management, lack of concentration, and lack of interest in the learning activities. They will give more importance to gaming rather than completing their homework and preparing the exams, which are more important academic activities, and they end up recording low grades and school involvement. The long-term effects of exposure to the gaming conditions may also affect the attention span, its memory, and self-regulation as a core of academic success. Such trends of digital addiction do not only affect their cognitive ability but also affect their emotional and social growth in the school environment. In addition to academic decline, the excessive gaming addiction is linked to anxiety, aggression, sleep deprivation, and lack of exercise.

The addiction to online gaming among students of the secondary level is gainfully spreading in the context of Nepal. Such gaming has never been as accessible as it is currently due to the increasing access to the mobile devices and the internet, both usually on parents' smartphones. Nonetheless, there is little awareness on the topic of responsible digital use and most schools have not enacted the effective policies to control the time that these students spend on the screen. Students, therefore, find it hard to keep at a healthy balance between the schoolwork and playing games, which leads to their poor academic performance and development of behavioral problems. In Nepal, many parents see gaming as harmless fun, unaware of its addictive risks.

The World Health Organization (WHO) now regards the gaming disorder as a type of behavioral addiction, whereby the student cannot control the habit of playing and continues to play the game even with its negative consequences. The adolescents are especially prone to such behaviors because of their stage of development and their desire for the social acceptance (Sunday et al., 2021). Many play games to get relief from stress, get rid of boredom, or connect with their friends online. However, as time goes on gaming is something that can become a compulsive habit that interferes with their school performance, sleep, and relationships (Erna, 2021; Rahyuni et al., 2021). Thus, what was just for fun can become a problem later. It is important for the parents and schools to understand this cycle so that it will be easier for them to help students to find a healthier balance.

There are some theoretical models like the uses and gratifications theory and self-

determination theory that help to gain a good insight into the psychological reasons of gaming behaviors. Zhang and Li (2025) explain that the psychological needs that students satisfy through gaming include having fun, being part of a group, and alleviating stress. These gratifications, however, when prevalent at the expense of academic interests, can lead to dependency. On the same note, Sun, Shek, and Dou (2023) describe how such games have the potential to increase motivation in the form of reward system and social interaction, but the overreliance on the extrinsic motivation may decrease the intrinsic motivation to learn. There are also some cognitive-behavioral views that show the problem of excessive gaming, which can deteriorate the executive functions, namely attention, planning, and emotional control, which are critical to the academic success (Erna, 2021; Sunday & Adebayo, 2021). These theoretical perspectives suggest that the gaming addiction is not simply a matter of poor discipline but a complex interaction between the psychological needs, social environments, and digital design features.

Many studies in South and East Asia have always found a negative correlation between the gaming addiction and academic achievement. Mahmud et al. (2023), Rahyuni et al. (2021), and Akhter et al. (2024) discovered that students who have more gaming addiction demonstrate the worse academic performance and less motivation as well as participation in the classroom activities. The countries like Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia have been reporting the increasing rates of gaming addiction and declining academic performance of students (Akhter et al., 2024; Rahyuni et al, 2021; Mahmud & Chowdhury, 2024). For example, a study conducted in Bangladesh revealed that students who played games for more than three hours a day performed much worse in grades and study habits (Akhter et al., 2024). Similarly, in China, a study showed that the online gaming addiction had a negative impact on the motivation of students to learn, mainly because the time spent on their gaming was the time spent doing their homework and studying (Sun et al., 2023). This usually happens because the video games are designed in such a way that the players feel excited and rewarding, which can make the schoolwork seem boring. Students might plan to study but they keep choosing to play just a little longer.

On the same note, few studies conducted in Nepal by Shahi and Saud (2024) and Manandhar and Timalsena (2023) showed that the excessive gaming is associated with a reduction in attendance, low levels of concentration, and poor performance. Nonetheless, as the recent research may indicate as well, the moderate and properly guided gaming can play a beneficial role in digital literacy, motivation, and problem-solving ability (Zhang & Li, 2025; Mahmud & Chowdhury, 2024). These results suggest that influence of online gaming would be dependent on where, how long, and how an individual plays. Gaming can both help and harm learning. It can make education fun and interactive, but without balance, it can lead to overuse. Other countries are using the gaming strategies to improve their lessons, but in Nepal, teachers and parents must find a way to encourage learning with technology while protecting students from addiction. This requires better awareness, and parents and teachers' collaboration to guide healthy digital habits among students.

Although more and more attention is paid to this problem on an international level, limited research on the secondary students in Nepal is still a rare phenomenon. The current literature is mostly focused on the university demographics and also based on the self-reported information with not much research being done to look at the school-based scenario. Since the education system

in Nepal is experiencing a rapid digitalization and the policy is not addressing the issues related to the online gaming as adequately, the academic and behavioral outcomes of online gaming in the adolescent population are critical to explore in this situation.

In Nepal, there are few studies done but the results are not much different. Shahi and Saud (2024) found that in a game play study with students in Kathmandu, the amount of attendance, the concentration, and the exam results were worse among students who played games regularly. Another study conducted by Manandhar and Timalsena (2023) also found that people who played games frequently often neglected their homework and felt tired in class. These local results show that the online gaming addiction is a new problem for the secondary school students in Nepal, particularly in the urban areas such as Pokhara and Kathmandu.

Nepal, despite the rising interest of global countries on the subject, still has not been able to produce the data-driven research in detail on the relationship between the online gaming and the academic performance of school-age children and teenagers. Most of the current studies are based on the university populations, or qualitative designs. Therefore, there is a lack of knowledge on the effects of gaming on the younger learners at the secondary levels.

This study focuses on filling this gap by conducting a quantitative study to know the relationship between the online gaming addiction and academic achievement [in terms of grade point average (GPA)] among the secondary level students of Pokhara Metropolitan City. By identifying the patterns of behavior, risk factors, and demographic group differences, the study is aimed at providing the practical information for educators, parents and policymakers.

Thus, this paper is expected to examine how this online gaming addiction is relative to the academic performance of secondary-level learners in Nepal. In particular, it aims at identifying the prevalence of gaming addiction among students, whether it correlates with the major academic outcomes (GPA and attendance) and the demographic variables affecting the gaming behaviour. The results of the study are set to impact the policy in education, assist in developing the digital literacy programs, and education towards more healthy technology use among Nepali youths. This study helps fill an important gap in both academic research and educational practice in Nepal. Finally, understanding the gaming addiction among the secondary students can help to design some preventive strategies that encourage the healthy technology use.

RESEARCH METHODS

The type of research design integrated during the study was a quantitative and descriptive correlational study design that was used to establish the association between the online gaming addiction and the academic performance of the secondary-level students in Nepal. The descriptive component was utilized to determine the levels and the character of the online gaming behavior as compared to the correlational analysis, which was utilized in determining the strength and direction of the correlation between the gaming addiction and the selected academic indicators, which include the GPA and school attendance. This design was deemed to be appropriate in identifying the relationship of behavioral and academic variables without any form of control of any kind of condition.

Population and Sample

Students of the secondary level in the public and private schools of the Pokhara Metropolitan City were used as the target population. The stratified random sampling technique was applied to sample

120 students to represent the percentage representation of schools of all the types and grades as well. In stratification, the sampling bias was minimized and the comparison of different demographic groups was made on a fair basis. It was a voluntary process in which the respondents were notified that they are free to withdraw the research at will with no consequences.

Research Instruments

The questionnaire had the five sections and was designed as structured. They include demographics, gaming habits, online gaming addiction scale, academic performance scale, and suggestions and perceptions. The following provides the details about these section:

1. Demographics (age, gender, school types, GPA)
2. Gaming Habits (frequency, length, favourite games).
3. Online Gaming Addiction Scale (10 items, 5-point Likert, based on the prior instruments that had been validated).
4. Academic Performance Scale (7 items that describe homework completion, participation, concentration)
5. Suggestions and Perceptions (open-ended items).

It is usually applied to identify the level of addiction of a person to the online games. A small sample of students was used in pre-testing the questionnaire to establish the validity, reliability, and clarity of the questionnaire.

Data Collection Procedure

The data were gathered during the normal school hours upon approval of school administration, teachers, parents, and students concerned. The questionnaire was also administered and gathered through a physical distribution and collection to ensure that they were standardized, and the respondents would not provide the biased answers. The respondents were assured of the privacy, and no information was recorded that could identify them personally. The entire process of data collection was performed according to the ethical principles and the institutional procedures of research.

Data Analysis Methods

The data obtained were processed using the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The descriptive statistics on the demographic characteristics and gaming behaviour had been applied using frequency, proportion, mean, and standard deviation. The inferential statistics involved in determining the relationship between the online gaming addiction and academic performance were correlated the coefficient and multiple regression analysis. In addition, the independent t-tests was done to identify whether there was any significant difference in the gaming addiction scores on the basis of the demographic variables i.e. sex, level of classes, and type of schools. The value was determined at $p < 0.05$.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to all the ethical aspects of research concerning the human subjects. The informed consent was voluntary and given to students and their guardians. The respondents have ensured anonymity and confidentiality and no information ever found its way in any other medium other than academic and research. The study was also reviewed and passed by the respective academic and institutional authorities prior to data collection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and interprets the results obtained from the field. The findings are organized into two parts: (1) demographic characteristics of the

respondents and (2) hypothesis testing. To organize them, this section has been divided into two sub-headings: results and discussion.

Results

The survey questionnaire is divided into the five sections: demographic profile, gaming habits, online gaming addiction scale, academic achievement scale, and open-ended questions, the data analysis begins by analysing the demographical profile of the respondents. The demographic information provides the background information about the participants, while the hypothesis testing addresses the relationship between the gaming addiction and academic performance, as well as the gender differences in the gaming addiction among the secondary school students in Nepal.

Table 1

Distribution of Respondents According to Type of School

School	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Public	48	40.0	40.0
Private	72	60.0	60.0
Total	**120**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Note: SPSS analysis, 2025

Table 1 displays the distribution of respondents based on the school type. The majority (60%) attended the private schools, while 40% were from the public schools. Both the private and public schools in Nepal have different infrastructure, access to digital technology, internet access, and parental supervision. The majority of students from the private school are more likely to have their own smartphone, internet access, and gaming console, which may make them to play the online games. On the other hand, the public school and students may not have an access. However, this gap has reduced in the recent years. Including students from both type of schools makes the study more generalizable because this variation enables a balanced comparison between students from the different educational contexts and access levels to the digital gaming platforms.

Table 2

Distribution of Respondents According to Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Female	55	45.8	45.8
Male	65	54.2	54.2
Total	120	100.0	100.0

Note: SPSS analysis, 2025

In Table 2, the distribution of respondents is presented by sex. Out of 120 respondents, 65 (54.2%) were male and 55 (45.8%) were female. The nearly balanced representation indicates that both genders were fairly represented, allowing the meaningful comparisons between the male and female students. The male students are engaged in the competitive and action-based games whereas the female students may prefer the casual or social games. Nearly equal numbers of male and female are included to reduce the sampling bias and for a meaningful statistical analysis of the gender difference in the gaming addiction.

Table 3

Distribution of Respondents by Reason for Playing Online Games

Reasons for Playing	Freq.	Percent	Valid Percent
For Fun	66	55.0	55.0
To relieve Stress	32	26.7	26.7
To pass time	15	12.5	12.5
To compete	6	5.0	5.0
To make online friends	1	.8	.8
Total	**120**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Note: SPSS analysis, 2025

Table 3 reveals a clear detail about the reasons for playing the online games. More than half of the respondents play for fun (55%), followed by to relieve a stress by 26.7% together counting for over 80% of responses. Of the other responses (20%) were to pass time, to compete and to make the online friends.

Table 4

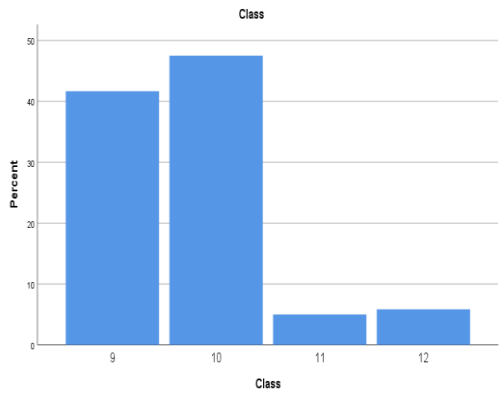
Distribution of Respondents by Type of Game Played

Game Type	Yes (%)	No (%)
PUBG	21.7	78.3
Free Fire	46.7	53.3
Mobile Legend	30.8	69.2
FC Mobile	17.5	82.5
Minecraft	23.3	76.7
Others	19.2	80.8

Table 4 reveals the types of online games played by the students of secondary level. The data show that Free Fire is the most frequently played games with 46.7%. This is followed by Mobile Legend with 30.8%, Minecraft with 23.3%, and PUBG with 21.7%. Meanwhile, FC Mobile and others online games were the least played. These findings suggest that students mostly play the battle style and multiplayer online games such as Free Fire and PUBG.

Figure 1

Distribution of Respondents by Class Level



Note: SPSS analysis, 2025

Figure 1 shows the respondents' participation by the grade level. The highest portion of students were in Grade 10 with 47.5%, followed by Grade 9 with 41.7%. Grade 11 and 12 holds minimal representation. This inclusion indicates that the sample largely consist from 9 to pre-SEE students who may be more addictive in the gaming activities due to the age related interest and digital access.

After exploring the demographic profile, the types of school, the types of game played, and the gaming habit of the students, the next section examines how these gaming behaviors relate to the gender differences and academic outcome through the hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis 1(H1): There is a significant negative relationship between academic performance and gaming addiction among secondary school students in Nepal, hence gaming addiction affects Grade Point Average (GPA)

Table 5

Correlations between Addiction score and GPA

		Addiction Score	GPA
Addiction Score	Pearson Correlation	1	-.364**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	120	120
GPA	Pearson Correlation	-.364**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	120	120

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Note: SPSS analysis, 2025

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to test the relationship between the gaming addiction and academic performance. The analysis revealed a significant negative relation, r (118) = -.36, p<.001, here Hypothesis 1 is supported. An analysis of regression further confirmed that the gaming addiction significantly predicted GPA (β=-.38, p< .001). These findings reveal that the higher gaming addiction score are associated with the lower academic performance. The excessive gaming may interfere the study time, concentration, and motivation that results in the poorer academic performance of students.

Hypothesis 2 (H_2): Male students exhibit significantly higher levels of gaming addiction compared to female students in Nepali secondary schools.

The independent samples *t*-test was conducted to examine the gender differences in the gaming addiction scores.

Table 5

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Addiction score	Equal variances assumed	9.584	.002	-3.262	118	.001	-4.84615	1.48559	-7.78803	-1.90428
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.425	99.060	.001	-4.84615	1.41505	-7.65390	-2.03841

Note: SPSS analysis, 2025

In Table 5, Levene's test indicated the unequal variances (F = 10.35, p = .002); thus, results assuming the unequal variances were reported. The male students (M = 22.14, SD = 7.61) scored significantly higher than the female students (M = 18.00, SD = 5.14), t(112.74) = -3.53, p = .001, with a medium-to-large effect size (d = 0.63). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the online gaming addiction has a significant negative impact on the academic performance among the secondary level students in Nepal. Those students having a higher addiction score have a lower GPA. These findings align with the global patterns showing that the male students are more likely to engage in the online gaming and exhibit the stronger gaming addiction behaviour than the female counterparts. The social norms, gender-specific preferences, and greater exposure to the gaming-related environments may explain these differences. The male students may require the targeted awareness programs, counselling, and parental supervision to reduce the gaming behaviors.

These findings are consistent with the previous research by Mahmud et al. (2023) and Rahyuni et al. (2021), who found that the higher gaming or gambling addiction levels are linked to the lower academic motivation and achievement among the adolescents. The similar outcomes were observed by Akhter et al. (2024), who reported that students deeply involved in the gaming recorded poorer GPAs and the lower classroom participation. The studies conducted in the Nepali context by Shahi and Saud (2024) and Manandhar and Timalsena (2023) further confirmed that the excessive gaming habits correspond with the poorer attendance and weaker examination performance.

The consistency of these findings across the various cultural and educational contexts enhances the validity of the current study. It indicates that the impacts of online gaming addiction on the academic performance are not confined to any particular country or educational system, rather they represent a more extensive global concern.

However, it is also important to address that a moderate gaming may have the social benefits such as the problem-solving skills and peer interaction. The key issue discussed here in this study is not gaming itself, but the excessive and uncontrolled gaming behaviors.

The results can be interpreted through the lens of Self-Determination Theory

(SDT) and Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT). According to the SDT, the external stimulation and rewards, which are associated with gaming can overshadow the motivation for the academic pursuits that leads to the poorer academic performance (Sun et al., 2023). Likewise, the UGT suggests that students who use gaming as a means of social interaction or stress relief may over-prioritize this gratification, neglecting their academic goals (Zhang & Li, 2025). Therefore, those theories help explain why gaming can often pull students away from their studies.

Overall, the above results demonstrate that the online gaming addiction has a significant negative effect on the students' academic performance. In comparison to female, the male students exhibit significantly higher levels of gaming addiction in the Nepali secondary schools.

This finding demonstrates the urgent need of collaboration between schools, teachers, parents, and policymakers to reduce the addiction level and to promote the balanced digital use. Schools can conduct the digital literacy and awareness programs; parents can monitor the screen time at home and policymakers can support any initiatives that encourage the healthy technology use among adolescents.

Future researchers may have a gap to explore other factors such as parental monitoring, effect of specific games played, and psychological well-being to gain a deeper understanding of gaming addiction and its academic consequences.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this paper, the association between the online gaming addiction and academic achievement has been evaluated among the high school students in Nepal. The data collection was done through the descriptive-correlational design on 120 students in the public and private schools within Pokhara Metropolitan City. The data were gathered using a structured questionnaire with the demographic variables, gaming behaviors, and academic performance including GPA score. SPSS was used to analyze the data. The descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and independent t-test was used to find out how strong the relationship were. The results showed that the online gaming addiction has statistically a significant negative agreement with the academic performance of students ($r = .364$, $p < .01$), which means that the higher the gaming addiction, the lower the GPA and the school engagement. The findings indicated that the male students exhibit significantly the higher levels of gaming addiction compared to the female students. This study is parallel to other studies done in the South Asian countries that have all found that too much gaming makes people less motivated, focused, and successful in schools.

This study is timely with regard to the Nepali setting, which reflects an increasing problem of gaming on the internet among the young people. The gaming addiction seems to become more common and is promoted by a high accessibility of the smartphones and the lack of awareness about the healthy online behaviours. Notably, the paper shows that although these digital games may have the partial benefits such as the ability to relieve stress and socialize, the extreme or unmoderated gaming has obvious threats to the progress of educational growth and the general health of students.

This paper hence emphasizes the importance of a moderate and sensible attitude towards using the digital technologies among the young students. The findings have a practitioner value to teachers, parents, policymakers, and technology players with the interests in the academic and psychological wellbeing of students in the digital age.

Based on the results of the study, it is possible to suggest a number of recommendations aimed at reducing the

impact of online gaming addiction on secondary-level students:

- Parents are advised to ensure that the process of gaming has been monitored and regulated in such a way that it allows their children a healthy balance between entertainment and gaming as well as their studies. This addiction can be avoided through setting rules concerning the screen-time in the household and through an open communication on the topic of digital behaviors.
- It involves a wide range of activities that are carried out in various schools. Awareness campaigns and counselling should be included in the school curriculum to inform students about the dangers of gaming addiction. Digital literacy and time management modules can also be included in schools to encourage the responsible online behaviours.
- The teachers must be trained to know the signs of behaviours related to gaming at an early stage and support the academic performance or make a referral to the counsellor when needed. Monitoring of behaviors at the classroom level could assist students to be refocused and motivated.
- The development of the curriculum must incorporate technology as a vital component. The curriculum development should include technology as an essential element of curriculum development. The educational boards and policymakers ought to come up with the national policies regarding the use of digital devices in schools and the recommended screen time that can be used. The incorporation of digital wellness education in schools might also assist students to acquire the self-regulation skills.
- The cooperation of parents and internet service providers may assist in the use of parental control tools to limit its excessive gaming during studying hours.

The future researchers need to include more respondents and cover more diverse areas to look at the different socio-economic and geographical settings. They also need to do many long-term studies to find out how gaming affects the academic and mental health over time. It is also possible that the mixed-method techniques that use both quantitative and qualitative data would help the future researchers better understand why students play games and how they feel about it.

To sum up, although the online gaming is an inseparable part of the new youth culture, the uncontrolled and excessive use of this kind of entertainment is a serious threat to the academic achievement and psychological well-being of students. This study will add to the current knowledge on the digital behaviour of adolescents in Nepal and will be used to support the evidence-based interventions that encourage the balanced, healthy, and productive use of technology in education.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest. This research was conducted independently without financial, political, or personal relationships that could inappropriately influence the study's findings or interpretations.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

I declare that this manuscript is my original work.

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