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## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AND ONLINE GAME PLAYING AMONG ADOLESCENTS AT SMA NEGERI 2 MEDAN 2025

Lindawati Simorangkir<sup>1</sup>, Lili Suryani Tumanggor<sup>2</sup>, Agnes Yesica Pakpahan<sup>3</sup>

Nursing Study Program, Santa Elisabeth Institute of Health, Medan, Indonesia

\*Correspondence Email: [lindasimorangkir79@gmail.com](mailto:lindasimorangkir79@gmail.com)

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### ABSTRACT

*Playing online games provides teenagers with entertainment and a means of expression, but excessive use can interfere with real-world interaction and lead to social isolation. This study aims to determine the relationship between interpersonal communication and online gaming among adolescents at SMA Negeri 2 Medan. The study design used a cross-sectional approach with a correlational method. The study population was students of SMA Negeri 2 Medan, with a sample of 81 respondents drawn through random sampling techniques and data collection using questionnaires. This study has also been declared ethically appropriate by the Health Research Ethics Commission of STIKes Santa Elisabeth Medan with letter number No. 178/KEPK-SE/PE-DET/XI/2025. The results of the Spearman Rank statistical test showed that the majority of respondents had a low level of interpersonal communication (49.4%) and a moderate level of online gaming (55.6%). Data analysis produced a p value of 0.000 with a correlation coefficient of -0.385, indicating a significant and negative relationship. This means that the better the quality of adolescents' interpersonal communication, the lower the intensity of online gaming.*

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### KEYWORDS

*Interpersonal Communication, Online Games, Adolescents*



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### INTRODUCTION

Technology plays a significant role in the entertainment sector (Rohmatila, 2025). one example being online games, which have become a new internet-based lifestyle (Pasapan, 2023). This activity provides teenagers with opportunities for adventure, strategy development (Asmiati, 2021), and global socialization without face-to-face interaction, offering unique entertainment experiences (Stella, 2024).

The habit of playing online games for hours on end can make teenagers individualistic, neglectful of their surroundings, and make it difficult for them to adapt due to the complete lack of attention (Renata, 2023). This excessive use is very dangerous and can lead to addiction, a condition where someone continuously spends their free time playing online games to the point of losing control (Sandya, 2021).

The more time they spend playing online games, the more their communication skills and social interactions with those around them decline. This negatively impacts teens because they lose empathy due to their complete attention being consumed by gaming (Ingrid T, 2021).

Playing online games should be limited to 3 hours a day, and more than that can lead to addiction (Manita, 2023). Teenagers who play online games 1-3 times a day for 1-4 hours per session can disrupt daily activities and routines (Pasapan, 2023).

The prevalence of gaming disorder has been recorded as quite high in various countries, such as 38.2% in Brazil and 67.4% in Saudi Arabia during quarantine (Hernández-Vásquez, 2022; Khrad, 2022). Furthermore, 62.7% of university students in Bangladesh play games for more than 30 hours per week, with males being more susceptible to addiction (Mahmud et al., 2023). In Indonesia, online gaming addiction has been shown to affect interpersonal communication in 53.1% of high school students in Berau Regency (Pasapan, 2023).

Based on a preliminary survey conducted through interviews with 10 11th-grade students at SMA Negeri 2 Medan in 2025, all respondents were well-versed in online gaming and spent between 1 and 3 hours per day playing on their mobile phones, relying on their home Wi-Fi connection. They used online gaming as a way to unwind after studying, but often felt frustrated and used profanity while playing. Some even admitted to lying to their parents and continuing to play even after being scolded.

Teenagers generally spend their free time playing online games at home, school, or in cafes from morning to night, even staying up late during school holidays to try out new strategies and improve their rankings. This habit leads to a decline in interpersonal communication, which negatively impacts adolescent mental development (Fiki, 2025).

Adolescents' involvement in online gaming is influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors originate within the individual, such as motivation, discipline, self-esteem, and behavior, while external factors include parenting styles, social interactions, communication styles, and parental supervision (N. Utami, 2023).

Excessive online gaming can reduce adolescents' interactions with family and others (Rakhmaniar, 2024), disrupt their focus on learning (Kurnada, 2021), and trigger various negative problems, such as skipping school, misusing pocket money to purchase game items, and health problems (Syahril, 2023; Pandu, 2022). Furthermore, this habit also has psychological impacts, leading to aggressive behavior, such as anger and dissatisfaction, which carry over into daily life (Mardiyah, 2025).

Solutions to prevent teenagers from playing online games excessively include attention switching, dissuasion, education, parental monitoring, resource restrict (Saputra, 2023), and building good interpersonal communication so that teenagers can express their thoughts and feelings (Rakhmaniar, 2024).

The two-way interpersonal communication model involves reciprocal roles between parents and children, where they alternately act as senders and receivers of messages. Through feedback provided by the child, such as compliance, indifference, or anger, both parents can assess and evaluate the success of the communication (Juwita, 2022).

Good interpersonal communication is highly influential in shaping self-concept, building intimacy, practicing listening skills, and managing emotions (Thitahia, 2024).

Furthermore, this skill helps adolescents increase their motivation to communicate, develop verbal talents (Rusdayanti, 2023), and practice self-disclosure so others can better understand their thoughts and experiences (Nur Azizah, 2024).

Based on the problems above, the researcher is interested in examining whether there is a relationship between interpersonal communication and playing online games among adolescents at Primbanan Medan Private High School.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This cross-sectional correlational study aims to analyze the relationship between interpersonal communication and online gaming habits among 11th-grade students at SMA Negeri 2 Medan. The study population was all 11th-grade students, using a proportional random sampling technique, resulting in a sample size of 81 respondents. Primary data collection used a questionnaire that had been tested for validity and reliability. Data analysis was performed using the Spearman Rank statistical test.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Frequency distribution of respondent characteristics based on demographic data (age, gender, playing online games since age, internet facilities at home, duration of playing online games per day) at SMA Negeri 2 Medan in 2025 (n=81).

| Respondent Characteristics                     | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| <b>Age</b>                                     |               |                |
| 15 Years                                       | 9             | 11,1           |
| 16 Years                                       | 65            | 80,2           |
| 17 Years                                       | 7             | 8,6            |
| <b>Total</b>                                   | <b>81</b>     | <b>100</b>     |
| <b>Gender</b>                                  |               |                |
| Male                                           | 33            | 40,7           |
| Female                                         | 48            | 59,3           |
| <b>Total</b>                                   | <b>81</b>     | <b>100</b>     |
| <b>Playing Games Since Age</b>                 |               |                |
|                                                | 47            | 58,0           |
| 4-10 Years                                     | 34            | 42,0           |
| 11-15 Years                                    |               |                |
| <b>Total</b>                                   | <b>81</b>     | <b>100</b>     |
| <b>Is there internet facility at home? Yes</b> |               |                |
| No                                             | 71            | 87,7           |
|                                                | 10            | 12,3           |
| <b>Total</b>                                   | <b>81</b>     | <b>100</b>     |
| <b>Playing Online Games</b>                    |               |                |
| 2 Hours a Day                                  | 50            | 61,7           |
| 3Hours                                         | 10            | 12,3           |
| >3Hours                                        | 11            | 13,6           |
| Not Playing Online Games                       | 10            | 12,3           |
| <b>Total</b>                                   | <b>81</b>     | <b>100</b>     |

Table 1, of the 81 respondents, the majority (80.2%) were 16 years old, with 59.3% being female. The majority (58.0%) started playing online games between the ages of 4 and 10. Furthermore, the majority (87.7%) had internet access at home, and 61.7% spent two hours per day playing online games.

Table 2 Frequency distribution of respondents based on interpersonal communication at SMA Negeri 2 Medan in 2025 (n=81)

| Interpersonal Communication | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Good                        | 14            | 17.3%          |
| Moderate                    | 27            | 33.3%          |
| Less                        | 40            | 49.4%          |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>81</b>     | <b>100</b>     |

Table 2 Based on a study of 81 respondents at SMA Negeri 2 Medan in 2025, the majority of students 40 students (49,4%) were in the less category of interpersonal communication. This was followed by 27 students (33.3%) in the good category, and 14 students (17.3%) in the good category. The lack of interpersonal communication among adolescents at SMA Negeri 2 Medan was evident in their low self-concept, abilities, emotions, and self-disclosure. This was evidenced by questionnaire responses, which revealed that respondents still struggled to restrain themselves from hurting their parents, rarely apologized when offended, became easily angered when interrupted, paid little attention when others spoke, and had difficulty admitting mistakes.

Based on the study results, researchers hypothesized that the low interpersonal communication among SMA Negeri 2 Medan students was caused by adolescents' difficulty controlling their speech, their inability to admit mistakes or apologize, and their limited ability to manage their emotions. Furthermore, these difficulties were exacerbated by adolescents' tendency to be easily annoyed by others and their inability to be active listeners during communication.

Interpersonal communication is the process of conveying information, ideas, emotions, and personal potential using words, symbols, or images to achieve a shared goal. As a form of behavior, the effectiveness of this communication can fluctuate, sometimes improving or worsening over time.

Causes of poor interpersonal communication in adolescents include excessive criticism, lack of attention, and minimal emotional support, which can damage self-concept, lower self-confidence, and trigger relationship problems in the future (Hermansyah, 2021). Positive communication with parents fosters a healthy self-concept in adolescents, while verbal barriers such as failing to filter hurtful remarks from parents indicate a negative self-concept (Nurcahyani, 2023).

Poor emotional management, escapism from real relationships, and conflicts with others lead adolescents to gravitate toward virtual friendships (Kanda, 2024). Adolescent self-disclosure is highly dependent on the quality of their relationships with their parents; If communication is poor, teenagers tend to withdraw, are reluctant to admit mistakes, and have difficulty expressing their problems (Irsa, 2023). Effective communication skills rely heavily on listening skills and empathy to build harmonious relationships. A lack of these skills makes it difficult for someone to absorb messages, lose focus, and fail to fully understand the person they are talking to (Hadi, 2025).

Table 3. Frequency distribution of respondents based on playing online games at SMA Negeri 2 Medan in 2025 (n=81)

| Playing Online Games | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Medium               | 26            | 32.1%          |
| Low                  | 45            | 55.6%          |
| Weight               | 10            | 12.3%          |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>81</b>     | <b>100</b>     |

Table 3 The research results showed that the majority of online game players were in the moderate category, with 45 students (55.6%), followed by 26 students (32.1%) in the

heavy category, and 10 students (12.3%) in the low category. The high level of online game playing among students at SMA Negeri 2 Medan was evident in several respondent habits, such as lying to play, spending more than 3 hours, playing beyond the planned time, and viewing games as an escape to forget problems. Overall, this online game playing activity fell into the moderate and heavy categories in terms of tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, and relapse.

Based on the research results, researchers assume that high intensity of game playing indicates unmet psychological needs in adolescents. Behaviors such as lying, playing for more than 3 hours, and exceeding time limits indicate conflicting priorities. Furthermore, the assumption that games can eliminate problems indicates that this activity is used as a temporary escape to manage emotions, which ultimately has the potential to trigger interpersonal and intrapersonal conflict. Internal factors of gaming addiction include the desire to achieve high scores, difficulty managing priorities, boredom, and lack of self-control. External factors include a poorly controlled environment, poor social relationships, and excessive parental demands for tutoring. As a result, children's basic needs for play and family bonding are neglected (Irawan, 2021).

Teenagers typically spend 2 to 5 hours per day playing online games, and this duration increases on weekends when parental supervision is reduced. This phenomenon suggests that high levels of gaming intensity are due to a lack of clear rules and regulations within the family (Febrianti, 2023). Children who play online games tend to be rebellious, often lie to keep playing, and are difficult to ask for help because they are too engrossed in their games (Agung Dermawan, 2025). Excessive exposure to online games can significantly alter children's emotional behavior. While some children can benefit socially from the digital world, most experience negative impacts such as becoming more aggressive, less disciplined, and having difficulty controlling their emotions (Hanifah, 2025).

Table 4. Spearman Rank Correlation Test Results The Relationship Between Interpersonal Communication and Playing Online Games in Adolescents at State Senior High School 2 Medan in 2025 (n=81)

| Correlations |                             |                          |                             |                      |
|--------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
|              |                             |                          | Interpersonal Communication | Playing Online Games |
| Spearman rho | Interpersonal Communication | Correlation Coefficient  | 1,000                       | -.385**              |
|              |                             | Sig. (2-tailed)          |                             | .000                 |
|              |                             | N                        | 81                          | 81                   |
|              | Playing Online Games        | Correlations Coefficient | -.385**                     |                      |
|              |                             | Sig. (2-tailed)          | .000                        | 1,000                |
|              |                             | N                        | 81                          |                      |
|              |                             |                          |                             | 81                   |

Table 4 shows research conducted at SMA Negeri 2 Medan in 2025 showed a significant relationship between interpersonal communication and online gaming habits in adolescents, with a p-value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ). The Spearman Rank test yielded a correlation coefficient of -0.385, indicating a moderately strong, negative relationship. This means that the higher the intensity of online gaming, the lower the adolescent's interpersonal communication level, with both variables falling within the moderate category.

This study demonstrates a relationship between interpersonal communication and online gaming habits in adolescents. Most adolescents who experienced poor interpersonal communication also had moderate online gaming intensity, indicating that moderate gaming frequency may limit their face-to-face communication skills. However, some adolescents were still able to demonstrate good interpersonal communication despite

moderate gaming. This may be due to their ability to balance time between the real and virtual worlds, or because they use online gaming as an alternative means of interaction.

When adolescents spend a significant portion of their time interacting in virtual environments, the time allocated for direct face-to-face interactions in the real world is reduced. This leads to a decline in interpersonal communication skills, as the ability to read facial expressions, body language, and emotional sensitivity (empathy) is rarely practiced directly.

The results of this study are supported by a study by Pasapan (2023), which found a significant relationship between online game addiction and interpersonal communication in high school students. Although Pasapan found a positive relationship in the context of addiction, the study at SMA Negeri 2 Medan showed a negative correlation coefficient of -0.385, confirming that increased online gaming habits are directly related to a decline in the quality of adolescents' interpersonal communication. This finding remains in line with Pasapan's view that students who are overly focused on online games tend to neglect social interactions with those around them.

Satria (2021) found a positive change in interpersonal communication among adolescents within the family environment thanks to the game Mobile Legends. This collaborative game requires cooperation and effective communication between players to win. This ultimately has a positive impact on training and improving players' interpersonal communication skills.

The researchers concluded that the negative relationship indicates an inverse relationship, where the more intense the adolescents' online gaming, the lower the quality of their interpersonal communication. This finding is supported by Tobing's (2021) research at SMK Telkom 2 Medan, which also recorded a significant negative relationship ( $r = -0.343$ ), indicating that high levels of game addiction reduce communication effectiveness. This is evident in data from SMA Negeri 2 Medan, where the majority of respondents were in the moderate (55.6%) and heavy (32.1%) gaming categories, in line with their low levels of interpersonal communication (49.4%). This condition occurs because adolescents are more focused on virtual interactions and spend most of their time online, thus hindering their ability to socialize in the real world.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analysis using the Spearman Rank statistical test in a study at SMA Negeri 2 Medan in 2025, a  $p$  value of 0.001 ( $p < 0.05$ ) was obtained with a negative correlation coefficient and was in the moderate category. This concludes that there is a significant relationship between interpersonal communication and online gaming habits in adolescents. The direction of the negative relationship indicates an inversely proportional nature, where the higher the intensity of adolescents in playing online games, the lower the quality of their interpersonal communication.

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**Author's short biography**

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**Authors Name:**

Name : Lindawati Simorangkir

Affiliation : Prodi Ners Institut Kesehatan Santa Elisabeth Medan

Phone Number : 085831167420

Email : [lindasimorangkir79@gmail.com](mailto:lindasimorangkir79@gmail.com)

Lindawati Simorangkir, S.Kep., Ns., M.Kes., is an academic and lecturer in the Nursing Study Program who actively researches community health issues, particularly in adolescents. Through her numerous scientific publications, she is committed to making a tangible contribution to developing support strategies for parents and educators to face the challenges of the digital age.

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**Authors Name:**

Name : Lili Suryani Tumanggor

Affiliation : Prodi Ners Institut Kesehatan Santa Elisabeth Medan

Phone Number : 081361110490

Email : [lilitumanggor1@gmail.com](mailto:lilitumanggor1@gmail.com)

---

**Authors Name:**

Name : Agnes Yesica Pakpahan

Affiliation : Prodi Ners Institut Kesehatan Santa Elisabeth Medan

Phone Number : 081260155085

Email : [agnespakpahan210904@gmail.com](mailto:agnespakpahan210904@gmail.com)

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