



# Education Quarterly Reviews

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**Koçođlu, E., Biçer, R., & Biçer, T. D. (2025). Student Perceptions Related to Digital Games: A Phenomenological Analysis. *Education Quarterly Reviews*, 8(2), 68-81.**

ISSN 2621-5799

DOI: 10.31014/aior.1993.08.02.580

The online version of this article can be found at:  
<https://www.asianinstituteofresearch.org/>

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Published by:  
The Asian Institute of Research

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# Student Perceptions Related to Digital Games: A Phenomenological Analysis

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## Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine the perceptions of 7th grade secondary school students about digital games. The study was designed in accordance with phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research approaches. A semi-structured interview form consisting of open-ended questions was used as a data collection tool. The study group of the research consisted of 50 secondary school 7th-grade students who were selected by simple random sampling method and who were continuing their education in two different secondary schools in Battalgazi district of Malatya province. The data collection tool prepared by the researchers was delivered to the students in the study group and necessary information about how to fill out the form was given. Care was taken to select the students in the study group on a voluntary basis and to avoid statements that could direct them. The data obtained from the research were analyzed with the content analysis technique. According to the results obtained, it was determined that students turned to digital games to have fun and relieve boredom, the content is very important in game selection, action, creativity, adventure and intelligence-strategy games are played more. In addition, it was determined that positive emotions such as happiness, excitement and fun, and negative emotions such as stress and greed were more prominent while playing games, and almost half of the students recommended playing digital games to their friends. The results obtained were discussed in line with the relevant literature and the study was concluded with recommendations.

**Keywords:** Game, Digital Game, Secondary School, Student, Phenomenology

## 1. Introduction

In Latin, all words related to play and games are expressed as "ludus" and "ludere". These words include children's play, relaxation, competition, ritual representations, in the general sense stage representations and games of chance (Huizinga, 2022). The Latin word "play" is essentially a very comprehensive umbrella term. While traditional gaming is a field that different disciplines are interested in, the discipline examining digital gaming is called "Ludology" (Binark & Bayraktutan- Sütçü, 2008; Bayzan & Güneş, 2022).

Play is the most indispensable part of childhood and plays an important role in children's development. From the past to the present, play has taken place in all communities from children to adults in order to fulfill various needs.

It can be stated that the game, which is a part of life, has undergone a change by being affected by changing living conditions (Toran et al., 2016; Yiğit Açıkgöz & Yalman, 2018; Biricik & Atik, 2021). In this sense, games have turned into digital games that are technology-based, supported by text and visuals, and integrated with new-generation entertainment software played with one or more people on computers or electronic media, consoles, mobile devices and smartphones (Dijital Oyunlar Raporu, 2020; Ilgaz & Abay, 2020; Baldemir & Övür, 2021). In particular, the increased use of smartphones in daily life leads the individual to become vulnerable to abuse by providing personalized usage areas. Although it is difficult to estimate the extent of the danger posed by smartphones regarding digital games, it can be stated that the situation will become clearer over time (Bayzan, 2022).

With digital transformation, technological devices have entered human life more, which has increased misuse and excessive internet use. Today, when everyone is a candidate for digital obesity, certain strategies should be developed for the use of digital devices (Koçoğlu et al., 2022). The use of digital technologies is one of the important steps of technological life and is a stepping stone to changing perceptions of play (Srai & Lorentz, 2019). Increased use of digital technology also leads to changes in the games played by children. Griffiths et al. (2012) and Kalınkara (2022) determined that digital games are in demand especially among young people, the tendency towards these games increases day by day and this causes addictions. Kuss and Griffiths (2012) and Surbakti et al. (2022) stated that digital games appeal mostly to children and adolescents and this group is more at risk for game addiction than other groups. Digital addiction arises as digital tools continue to be used despite the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and social effects of excessive use of these tools on the individual (Bağımlılıkla Mücadele Alt Çalışma Alt Çalışma Grubu Raporu, 2018; Kesici & Tunç, 2018; Bhatiasevi et al., 2023; Akbaş & İşleyen, 2024). It can be stated that digital addiction is an important problem like addictions such as alcohol, drugs, gambling, etc. and disrupts the basic dynamics of society.

Digital games are popular entertainment tools and are played with different devices. Players can compete with themselves or electronic devices, or they can play these games online with people from different places (Green & McNeese, 2008; Griffiths et al., 2012; Cemiloğlu et al., 2022; Mestre-Bach et al., 2022). It has been determined that the level of playing games increases with peer interaction, which increases digital game addiction. It is seen that these games, which are constantly increasing in popularity today, have an important place in the lives of young generations and increase their addiction levels (Aleksić, 2018).

Digital games are entertainment tools that often have harmful aspects. Continuous gaming behaviors insensibly cause students' addictions and harm them. In this sense, digital game addiction leads to serious psychosocial health problems such as loneliness, depression and aggression (Jeong et al., 2017). It can be said that training provided by relevant individuals, institutions and organizations will be effective in increasing the awareness levels of individuals against digital dangers in relation to health problems. In this sense, it may be possible to prevent health problems by raising health literate individuals (Biçer & Biçer, 2024). Along with health problems, it is seen that different problems such as inability to use time effectively, economic problems, sleep disorder, laziness in non-gaming activities, eating disorders and excessive emotionality are also related to digital addiction (Widiyawati & Arby, 2022). Therefore, it is understood that digital game addiction first affects the individual and then the society negatively in terms of both mental and physical health, and therefore necessary measures should be taken.

It can be stated that digital games have beneficial aspects. These games enable individuals to make sense of the world and society, learn new skills by learning unfamiliar rules and situations. It can be stated that games played in a controlled manner increase social interaction, hand-eye coordination and imagination, amplify the ability to visualize in the mind, provide an advantage in problem solving and risk-taking, learning with peers and coping with disappointments. Besides, it can be said that, within the process, knowledge, experience and emotional connections related to the digital game will be increased, contributing to a rich texture of meaning and thus creating a deep and meaningful relationship that can shape one's actions, behavior and even identity. According to some parents, digital games also contribute to children's foreign language skills and education. To associate games with education, the potential of using "Minecraft Education Edition" (MEE), the educational version of "Minecraft", an open world game, was evaluated in terms of the formal education process. In this sense, it can be considered as an important development that Vocational and Technical Anatolian High Schools in Turkey designed game-learning

digital materials to be used in the field of Information Technologies (Green & McNeese, 2008; Granic et al., 2014; Irmak & Erdoğan, 2016; Eroğlu, 2019; Söğüt, 2020; Savaş et al., 2021; Meston et al., 2025; Sokka et al., 2025).

It can be said that changes in city structures, narrowing playgrounds, seasonal problems, increased dangers on the streets, and the increase in smartphone and internet use have a significant impact on the increase in digital game addiction in children (Biricik & Atik, 2021). Furthermore, during the Covid-19 pandemic that emerged in 2020, there was a significant increase in the use of digital devices due to changes in educational practices and increased remote connectivity. Therefore, it can be stated that digital addictions have increased and encouraging efforts to increase social awareness of healthy technology use have started to gain importance (Koçoğlu et al., 2024). In the same period, interest in digital games increased, and the number of people playing digital games exceeded 3 billion people in 2022. In 2025, this number is expected to reach 3.5 billion people (Dijital Oyun Bilgi Platformu, 2022). It can be stated that this number will increase day by day unless necessary measures are taken.

In the literature, there is a large number of studies (Griffiths, 2008; Griffiths et al., 2012; Xu et al., 2012; Griffiths, 2014; Griffiths et al., 2014; Novrialdy & Atyarizal, 2019; Kalınkara, 2022; Király et al., 2023; Kurt Topraklı & Kavlak, 2025) related to game addiction, internet addiction, internet gaming disorder, video game addiction, online game addiction, gaming disorder and digital game addiction. In addition, there are many studies on the perceptions of students at different levels regarding digital games in secondary school (Güvendi et al., 2019; Hazar et al., 2020; Küçük & Çakır, 2020; Talan & Kalınkara, 2020; Özdemir & Karaboğa, 2021; Çakır, 2022; Durak, 2023; Yunusoğlu, 2025), high school (Karabulut, 2019; Soyöz-Semerci & Balcı, 2020) and university (Pala & Erdem, 2011; Kesici & Tunç, 2018; Aktaş & Bostancı, 2021; Karabulut Coşkun & Akçay, 2023).

In this study, secondary school 7th-grade students' views on digital games were collected and evaluations were made. Although there has been an increase in the number of studies on the subject, no similar study on digital games has been found in literature. This shows that this study will contribute to literature and increase its importance.

### *1.1. Purpose of the Study*

The aim of this study is to evaluate the perceptions of 7th-grade secondary school students about digital games from a phenomenological perspective. Within the framework of this general purpose, answers to the following questions were sought.

- Do you play digital games and why?
- When choosing the digital games, you play which feature of the game do you pay attention to and why?
- What digital game or games do you play? Please write their names.
- What are the emotions that come to the fore when you play digital games?
- Do you recommend digital gaming to your friends and why?

## **2. Research Methodology**

### *2.1. Research Model*

This research was conducted using qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research can be defined as a research method that designs data collections in the natural environment that is sensitive to people and places in research with both inductive and deductive methods, establishes patterns and themes, and includes data analysis. Qualitative studies, which are eventually turned into a written report, include the thoughts of the participants and the researcher, the interpretation of the problem, the contribution to literature or the call for change that they want to present (Creswell, 2020).

This research was conducted in accordance with phenomenology design. Yıldırım & Şimşek (2018) define this design as a design that focuses on phenomena that we are aware of but do not have an in-depth and detailed understanding. Merriam (2018) defines phenomenology as research that enables understanding the structure and essence of the phenomenon; Zahavi (2020) explains phenomenology as the science of phenomena or the studies

related to it and states that phenomenology is the study that makes a difference in the handling, analysis and interpretation of existing data. In this study, in line with the method of the research, phenomenology design was used to determine why secondary school 7th grade students play digital games, what they pay attention to when choosing games, which games they play, the types of games they play, the emotions they experience while playing games, and the reasons for recommending these games to their friends.

## *2.2. Working Group*

After obtaining the necessary permissions for the study, the two schools named below were visited for the study. The study group of the research consisted of students from two different schools, Necip Fazıl Kısakürek İmam Hatip Secondary School and Rahmi Akıncı Secondary School in Battalgazi district of Malatya province. For the study, it was ensured that the research groups were close to each other in terms of academic level and socio-economic status. In this sense, class selections were made based on grade point averages and the opinions of classroom guidance counselors. The study group consisted of a total of 50 secondary school 7th grade students, 27 males and 23 females. The members of the study group, to whom the interview form was applied for the research, were selected by simple random sampling method from random sampling methods. Because determining the study group with this sampling method is more advantageous in terms of time and cost. From each of the two schools, 25 participants were selected from the class attendance records by simple random sampling method. All individuals in this sampling method had equal probability of being selected and the selection of one individual did not affect the selection of other individuals. The best and most valid way to select a representative sample is the random sampling method. Because it can be said that the simple random sampling method is more powerful than other methods in ensuring representation (Büyüköztürk et al., 2018).

## *2.3. Data Collection Tool*

The data of the study were obtained through a five-question semi-structured interview form prepared by the researchers to determine the perceptions of secondary school students about digital games. The interview form was created by going through certain steps. Accordingly, the interview questions were prepared after a literature review and examined by two field experts. In line with the expert opinions, the form was finalized by evaluating the comprehensibility of the questions and their suitability for the purpose. A pilot study was conducted by applying the prepared form to the students at a secondary school different from the previously determined and researched schools. After the interview questions were verified, schools were selected for the research. As a result of the feedback obtained, the interview questions were finalized and data collection started. Thus, to obtain rich data from the study group, necessary information was given to the participants to go into detail, and it was tried to obtain the data in the desired direction. The required data for the study were obtained from the research questions directed to the study group within a plan. By this way, the data of the study were made ready for analysis.

## *2.4. Data Collection and Analysis*

As stated before, the data of the study were obtained from 7th grade students attending Necip Fazıl Kısakürek İmam Hatip Secondary School and Rahmi Akıncı Secondary School in Battalgazi district of Malatya province in the second semester of the 2023-2024 academic year. The application of pilot study was carried out through the interview form which was created before the research was applied to 7th grade students attending Kurucaova Şehit Şeyho Kurtulmuş Secondary School in Doğanşehir district of Malatya province. As a result of the application, the necessary corrections in the interview form were made by the researchers and the form was finalized. After obtaining the necessary appointments and permissions from the schools, data collections were conducted at the selected schools the relevant schools. Before the interview began, the students were informed about the purpose of the research. Through semi-structured interview forms, students wrote the necessary data on the forms during one class hour in a conducive environment.

The data obtained from this study conducted with 7th grade students was analyzed using the content analysis technique. Content analysis is a technique that allows researchers to examine large volumes of data more easily in

a systematic way (Government Accountability Office (GAO), 1996). In content analysis, it is aimed to reach concepts and connections that can explain the collected data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). The data were coded and categorized appropriately by the researchers. According to the themes identified.

### 2.5. Validity and Reliability

To determine the validity and reliability of this study, internal and external validity were utilizing Miles and Huberman's (1994) formula. According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2018), internal validity is the consistency of the researcher in the processes of data collection, analysis and interpretation during the research and to explain how this consistency is achieved. The semi-structured interview form was developed, guided by the opinions of two field experts to increase the internal validity of the research. To ensure the internal validity of the data obtained, a conducive environment was tested to provide the participants to answer the questions. Interviews were conducted after the participants felt ready and an atmosphere of trust was established. The data obtained from the interview form was reviewed and analysed. The themes, categories and codes created after the content analysis, were checked by submitting them for the opinion of a different field expert. After the findings were tabulated, direct quotations selected from the opinions of the participants were documented.

Yıldırım and Şimşek (2018) stated that external validity is expressed as the generalization of research results to similar environments and situations. To increase the external validity of the study, the data obtained were tried to be described in detail. The research process was reported as stages in a clear, plain and detailed manner. The research design, study group, data collection tools, data collection and analysis were explained in detail. The study group was selected from different classes and coded by hiding their real identities. Codes and categories were created through the interview documents, which were the main data source, then content analysis was done. To improve the quality of the research design, credibility and consistency were checked. In addition, Miles and Huberman's (1994) reliability formula ( $\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{Agreement}}{\text{Agreement} + \text{Disagreement}}$ ) was used and it was determined that the agreement rate between the coders was 92%.

## 3. Research Results

In this section, the findings obtained through analyzing the data as a result of the research are presented. The findings obtained through the analysis of the data were presented in accordance with the sub-objectives of the research.

### 3.1. Students' Digital Game Playing Status

The first sub-objective of the study is to determine whether the participants play digital games. The question asked in line with this sub-objective "Do you play digital games and why?". The code table and frequency values of the responses to the question are presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1: Students' Digital Game Playing Status

Gender	Yes	No	Frequency (f)
Girl	21	2	23
Boy	23	4	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>50</b>

Table 1 shows the data on the digital game playing status of 7th grade secondary school students. As seen in the table, it was determined that the majority of the students in the study group played digital games (f-44). The number of those who do not play games (f-6) was determined to be at a very low level. The number of boy and girl respondents playing games are close to each other can also be expressed as a remarkable result. The reasons why the respondents play digital games are given in Table 2. From the category who stated 'Yes', three codes were

identified related to enjoyment, boredom and learning while those stated 'No', indicated three codes related to waste of time, leading to addiction and harmful to health.

Table 2: Reasons for Playing Digital Games

Category	Code	Frequency (f)
Yes	Enjoyment	26
	Boredom	23
	Learning	7
No	Waste of time	3
	Leading to addiction	2
	Harmful to health	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>63</b>

Table 2 presents data on the reasons why the study group played games. Accordingly, it is seen that the number of statements given is numerically higher (f-63). The reason for this can be expressed by the fact that the participants in the study group provided more than one justification for the reasons for playing digital games. For example, Participant-19 provided more than one justification saying "Yes. For example, I mostly play car games. The reason: because I want to have fun and learn a little bit." Looking at the answers given to the question asked for the first sub-objective in Table 2, it was determined that almost all the students (f-56) played these games mostly for reasons such as having fun (f-26) and boredom (f-23). It was determined that those who do not play these games do not play these games for reasons such as wasting time, addiction and being harmful to health. Sample responses to the question are as follows:

*"Yes. Because sometimes people get bored and want to play." (K-3)*

*"Yes, sometimes I play because it is fun for me. But when I play too much, I cannot play anymore, it gets boring." (K-8)*

*"No. Because I think it is a waste of time. Reading books instead of playing games is both educational and fun." (K-33)*

### 3.2. Features Considered in Game Selection

The second sub-objective of the study is to determine the features considered when choosing digital games. The question asked in line with this sub-objective is "Which feature of the game do you pay attention to when choosing the digital games you play and why?". The code table and frequency values regarding the features considered in game selection are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Features Considered in Game Selection

Category	Code	Frequency (f)
Features of the Games	Content	49
	Recognition	7
	Security	6
	Cycle status	4
	Being instructive	2
	Covered area	2
Other	Those who do not pay attention	5
	Non-players	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>79</b>

As seen in Table 3, that the majority of the participants pay attention to the features of the games (f-70) when choosing a game. With the most important features considered being content, recognition and security. It is understood from the variety of codes that the features considered in game selection may vary from person to person. It is also noteworthy that there are participants who do not pay attention to game selection and do not play digital games. Sample expressions regarding the features considered in game selection are as follows:

*"That it is fun. Because there is no need to play games if we are not going to have fun." (K-5)*

*"How much space it takes up. Because it makes the phone slower." (K-24)*

*"I make sure that it is fun and does not contain bad content." (K-47)*

### 3.3. Classification of Games

There is no generally accepted classification of digital games (Kaleci, 2024). Therefore, digital games are classified in different ways according to the purpose of use, the materials used, the developmental period or the actions performed (Öztabak, 2017). In this sense, Hughes (2002) made a classification by dividing games into 16 different categories. However, in this study, the findings on the classification of digital games were classified according to the types of games played with the support of literature.

The third sub-objective of the study is to determine which digital games are played. In line with this sub-objective, the question directed to the participants was "What are the digital games or games you play? Please write their names." The codes and categories and frequency values of the responses to this question are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Classification of Games

Category	Code/Played Games	f
Action Games	Pubg Mobile (f-9), Garena/Free Fire (f-4), Call of Duty (f-3), Valorant (f-3), Counter Strike (f-2), Dying Light (f-2), Age of Empires (f-1), Assassin's Creed (f-1), Brawhalla (f-1), Conquer the World (f-1), Fall Guys (f-1), Global Offensive (f-1), God of War (f-1), Left 4 Dead (f-1), Ninja Game (f-1), Outlast (f-1), Shadow Fight (f-1), Steel and Flesh (f-1), Zula (f-1), Z-World (f-1).	37
Creativity Games	Roblox (f-8), Minecraft (f-7), Toca Life World (f-3), Anime (f-1), Car Modified (f-1), Block Star Planet (f-1), Drawing Game (f-1), Dealer's Life (f-1), Forager (f-1), House Flipper (f-1).	25
Adventure Games	GTA Series (f-6), Subway Surf (f-3), Color Block (f-2), Naruto Shippuden (f-2), Dancing Line (f-1), Going Balls (f-1), Moonlighters (f-1), Piano Music Go (f-1).	17
Intelligence-Strategy Games	Brawl Stars (f-7), League of Legends (f-3), Clash Royal (f-2), Ludo (f-1), Mound & Blade (f-1), The Hacker Game (f-1), Sudoku (f-1).	16
Sports Games	FIFA Series (f-5), PES Series (f-3), DSL (f-1), Volleyball Arena (f-1).	10
Games Played with Device	Euro Track Simulator (f-3), Forza Horizon (f-3), Traffic Rider (f-2).	8
Other	Candy Crush Saga (f-2), Duolingo (English/f-1), Instagram (f-1), Luvlingua (English/f-1), Nonogram (Japanese puzzle/f-1), Tiktok (f-1).	7
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>

The findings related to the third sub-objective of the study are presented in Table 4. Classification was carried out by determining which game was included in which kind of classification. It can be stated that the games played

are classified in different ways and show diversity. The game played most are action games (f-37) that require the struggle for survival. In addition, it is seen that creativity, adventure and intelligence-strategy games were also played at higher frequencies. The least played games were the games played with devices and the ones given under the title, other games. The fact that the participants in the study group played more than one game can be expressed as a remarkable result. Sample expressions regarding the classification of games are as follows:

*"Color Block/Traffic Rider/Drawing Games/GTA/ Ninja/Naruto/Dancing Line/ Music Piano" (K- 1)*

*"Brawl Stars, Roblox, Toca World, Minecraft." (K-13)*

*"League of legends (LOL)" (K-22)*

### 3.4. Emotions Emphasized While Playing Games

The fourth sub-objective of the study is to determine the emotions that come to the fore while playing digital games. The question asked in line with this sub-objective is "What are the emotions that come to the fore for you while playing digital games?". The code and category table and frequency values of the responses are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Emotions that come to the fore while playing games

Category	Code	Frequency (f)
Positive emotions	Happiness	20
	Excitement	18
	Enjoyment	14
	Self-confidence	5
Negative emotions	Stress	10
	Greed	6
	Anger	4
	Fear	3
Other	Not aware	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>84</b>

Table 5 presents the findings regarding the emotions that come to the fore while playing games. Accordingly, it is noteworthy that the emotions are generally positive, but there are also negative emotions. Happiness, excitement and having fun were the most common positive emotions, while stress was the most negative emotion followed by ambition. It can be stated that this situation is related to the fact that students see the game as an activity related to their happiness. Sample expressions related to emotions are as follows:

*"A sense of fun, curiosity." (K-34)*

*"I am happy when I play games." (K-44)*

*"I have fun, laugh and enjoy playing with love." (K-47)*

### 3.5. Recommendation Status of the Games

The fifth sub-objective of the study is associated with determining the recommendation of playing digital games. The question asked in line with this sub-objective is "Do you recommend playing digital games to your friends and why?". The code and category table and frequency values of the responses are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Recommendation Status of the Games

Category	Code	Frequency (f)
Yes	Being fun	15
	Stress relief	7
	Developing intelligence	5
No	Addiction	9
	Time Loss	8
	Harm to health	5
	Reducing success	2
Other	Not playing	4
	Not recommended	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>58</b>

It is better to quantify to indicate the total for each category like 'Twenty-seven responded with 'Yes' while twenty-four responded with 'No'. There were 7 respondents in the 'Other Category'. It is seen that those who play digital games recommend these games mostly on the grounds of "being fun". It was determined that those who responded with "No" do not recommend these games for reasons such as addiction and waste of time.

When positive and negative codes are considered together, it can be stated that the recommendation of students who play digital games stems from the perceptions and environments of individuals. Therefore, the recommendation situation is determined in line with the internal and external factors affecting the individual and this situation varies from person to person. Sample responses regarding recommending or not recommending are as follows:

*"I recommend it if it is a game we will have fun together." (K-6)*

*"I recommend digital games to my friend. For example, if my friend lives far away, we can chat with him/her by playing games." (K-20)*

*"I would not recommend it because it can be addictive and decrease success in lessons." (K-23)*

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The number of studies on digital games is increasing day by day. It was observed that 88% of the students two different schools in Malatya city center actively play digital games, even at different levels. In this sense, when evaluated in terms of children in the 11-14 age group, it is thought that playing these games may lead to some negative consequences in this age group.

In the study, the number of boy students who stated that they do not play games is higher than the number of girl students. In addition, the fact that the number of boy and girl students who play games is close to each other can be stated as a significant result. This is contrast to observations by boy students play digital games more than girl students (Griffiths et al., 2012; Öztabak, 2017; Karabulut, 2019; Keskin 2019; Soyöz-Semerci & Balcı, 2020).

Digital games have negative mental, physical, psychological, spiritual, emotional, social, economic and moral effects. The negative effects of games include violence, aggression, loneliness, fatigue, sleep disturbance, depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, internet addiction, game addiction, peer bullying and lack of socialization. Physical effects include obesity, back pain, neck pain, physical inactivity, orthopedic action muscle disorders, and vision and hearing problems (Green & McNeese, 2008; Güvendi et al., 2019; Hazar et al., 2020; Özdemir & Karaboğa, 2021; Çakır, 2022; Widiyawati & Arby, 2022). In another study, Yunusoğlu (2025) states that although there are harmful, there are also beneficial aspects. In which digital games contribute positively to students' creative thinking, visual design and artistic development processes, he also found that they cause physical

impairment. Thus, it can be concluded that digital games have harmful aspects that negatively affect human health as well as beneficial aspects.

Despite the negative effects, Granic et al. (2014) and Aleksić (2018) determined that with the increase in the level of game addiction; problem-solving skills in children can be developed, helping them in transferring items from digital environments to the real world, developing the desire to cooperate to solve problems, and has cognitive, motivational, emotional and social benefits.

The results obtained within the scope of the research questions are given below respectively.

Within the scope of the first question of the research, pertaining to the status of playing digital games is striking. Accordingly, it was determined that these games are played for fun, to relieve boredom and to learn. In addition, it was determined that digital games were avoided for reasons such as wasting time, being addictive and harming health. Işıkoğlu Erdoğan (2019) and Özdemir & Karaboğa (2021) state in their study that parents apply to the devices such as television and computers to distract their children who are bored at home, which leads to addiction. They suggest spending time with the family as a way of protecting children from addictions. Keskin (2019) concluded in his study that students who have more than one game tool are more addicted to games.

Within the scope of the second research question, it was observed that content was particularly important in game selection. However, there are also children who do not pay attention to the content and do not play games. In their study, Dursun and Eraslan-Çapan (2018) determined that adolescents make preferences for the need for entertainment in game selection. Toran et al. (2016) found that digital games are played more especially by children because they are fun, while Surbakti et al. (2022) found that it is one of the popular entertainment among young people. Accordingly, the fact that the content is entertaining is important in preference to playing the game.

Within the scope of the third research question, which the digital games were played were determined. The games played were presented in seven categories by the researchers. Action, creativity, adventure and intelligence-strategy games were the games played most. It was determined that Pubg Mobile in the action category, Roblox in the creativity category, GTA in the adventure games category, and Brawl Stars in the intelligence-strategy games category were the games played most. Aktaş & Bostancı (2021) compared the digital game playing time of university students before and during the pandemic. During the pandemic period, digital games were mostly played with phones during the pandemic, and the rate of playing war-strategy games had increased significantly. Similarly, according to the Digital Games Information Platform (2023); Pubg Mobile, Brawl Stars, Garena Free Fire, Head Ball 2, Roblox, 101 Okey Plus, Mobile Legends Bang Bang, Lords Mobile and similar games were preferred via mobile phones in Turkey in 2020, while hyper-casual and puzzle games were preferred by the general player base. Individuals were keener on digital games during the pandemic period and the game industry expanded even more.

Within the scope of the fourth research question, it was determined that positive emotions such as happiness, excitement and fun and negative emotions such as stress and greed came to the fore in children while playing digital games. Accordingly, it is understood that positive emotions are felt more than negative emotions while playing digital games. Games are entertainment tools that are preferred more especially by young people and children. It is understood that children feel different emotions during the game. In his study on internet games, Öztapak (2017) found that out of 80 students who participated in the study, the rate of students who would not feel any negative emotions when they removed internet games from their lives was 15%, and the rate of students who did not want internet games to leave their lives and who stated that they would have negative emotions when these games left their lives was 85%. This situation shows that school-age children are addicted to games. Güvendi et al. (2019) and Özdemir and Karaboğa (2021) found that more than half of secondary students were at risk of digital game addiction. When an inference is made regarding the level of addiction, it can be stated that the digital game addiction levels of the students are quite high and similar to the results of the study.

The fifth research question is related to the recommendation of digital games. More than half of the secondary school students participating in the study had negative perceptions. It is seen that almost half of the students recommend playing digital games to their friends. It can also be stated that being fun has an important effect on

recommendation. Biricik & Atik (2021) reported that children play similar games. It can be concluded that popularity and peer interaction are decisive in this. Similar observation was reported by Biricik & Atik (2021) has similar results with the results of this study.

As a result, it was determined that the perceptions of digital games of 7<sup>th</sup> grade secondary school students were significant in favor of game playing and their game playing levels were quite high. In this sense, it seems very difficult to prevent young generations who find themselves in the digital world from playing these games. For this reason, it is necessary to plan in the content of the games, attempt to reduce the duration of use and measures to reduce game addiction. It is understood that negative emotions come to the fore as well as positive emotions while playing digital games. Therefore, it is understood that young people should be more careful in the selection and play of digital games, and educational stakeholders and parents should have an awareness and consciousness about the issue. Based on the outcome of the study and the from literature reviews, the following suggestions can be made.

- ✓ As the study is a qualitative research with small sample size, more comprehensive studies should be conducted by using quantitative and mixed-method.
- ✓ Studies can be conducted with different research methods with different age groups beyond the 7<sup>th</sup> grade students starting from preschool period to postgraduate levels. In addition, comparative studies can be conducted between different levels.
- ✓ With digital game addiction determined at very high levels, awareness on the subject can be raised by organizing interviews, conferences and seminars for students, parents, teachers and parents. Support can be received from institutions and organizations that fight against digital game addiction.
- ✓ Considering that digital games are being played more and more every day, it is necessary to regulate the content of existing games and to filter the new games with content that may negatively affect the individual.
- ✓ By popularizing traditional games, especially intelligence games such as chess, etc., and sports activities among young generations, it can be ensured that they get rid of digital games and the addictions caused by these games.

**Author Contributions:** All authors contributed to this research.

**Funding:** Not applicable.

**Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Informed Consent Statement/Ethics Approval:** Not applicable.

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