

An Analysis Of The Impact Of Online Games On Social Development Among Students At SD IT Al-Husnayain: An Erikson Perspective

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Abstract *This study aimed to empirically examine the impact of online game usage on the social development of fourth-grade students at SD IT Al-Husnayain, Mandailing Natal, using Erikson's psychosocial development theory as an analytical framework. The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents, and supporting documentation. The research subjects included fourth-grade students, classroom teachers, and parents selected through purposive sampling. Data were analyzed through thematic stages consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicated that the majority of students engage in online gaming with high intensity, spending more than two hours per day on gaming activities. This condition has contributed to shifts in children's social behavior, as reflected in increased verbal conflicts, the use of aggressive language, emotional outbursts, and a decline in the quality of social interactions within both school and family environments. From Erikson's perspective, uncontrolled online game usage may hinder the successful resolution of the psychosocial crisis of industry versus inferiority, as children tend to derive their sense of achievement and competence more from virtual experiences than from real-life social interactions. However, the study also revealed that when online games are used in a structured, limited manner and under the supervision of teachers and parents, they can serve as a positive learning medium that enhances students' motivation and engagement.*

Keyword: online games, social development, Erikson's theory

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Abstrak Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis secara empiris dampak penggunaan game online terhadap perkembangan sosial siswa kelas IV di SD IT Al-Husnayain, Mandailing Natal, dengan menggunakan perspektif teori perkembangan psikososial Erikson. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa observasi nonpartisipatif, wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan guru dan wali murid, serta dokumentasi pendukung. Subjek penelitian meliputi siswa kelas IV, guru kelas, dan orang tua siswa yang dipilih secara purposif. Data dianalisis melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan secara tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar siswa memiliki intensitas bermain game online yang tinggi, dengan durasi bermain lebih dari dua jam per hari. Kondisi ini berdampak pada pergeseran perilaku sosial anak, yang ditandai dengan meningkatnya konflik verbal, penggunaan bahasa agresif, tantrum emosional, serta menurunnya kualitas interaksi sosial di lingkungan sekolah dan keluarga. Dalam perspektif Erikson, penggunaan game online yang tidak terkontrol berpotensi menghambat penyelesaian krisis psikososial *industry vs. inferiority*, karena pengalaman keberhasilan sosial anak lebih banyak diperoleh melalui dunia virtual dibandingkan interaksi sosial nyata. Namun demikian, penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa penggunaan game online yang terarah, terbatas, dan berada dalam pengawasan guru serta orang tua dapat dimanfaatkan secara positif sebagai media pembelajaran yang dapat meningkatkan motivasi dan keterlibatan siswa.

Kata Kunci: *game online, perkembangan sosial, teori Erikson*

A. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology over the past two decades has significantly transformed the social and psychological lives of children, particularly those at the primary school level (Setiadi et al., 2024). The widespread accessibility of smartphones, tablets, and internet-based applications has shifted children's roles from passive technology consumers to active participants in digital environments, including online gaming platforms (Presta et al., 2024). In many contemporary societies, online games are no longer viewed merely as recreational activities but have become embedded within children's daily routines, shaping patterns of communication, emotional expression, and social interaction (Fauziddin & Adha, 2024; Nurhafani et al., 2023). This phenomenon reflects a broader transformation in childhood socialization, where digital interaction increasingly mediates the development of children's interpersonal and social experiences.

Recent international studies have demonstrated that excessive engagement in online gaming may influence various dimensions of children's psychosocial development. Research conducted by Domoff et al. (2020) and Yifei & Motevalli (2023) found that prolonged digital gaming exposure is associated with reduced emotional regulation, lower empathy, increased impulsivity, and weakened face-to-face social interaction among school-aged children. Similarly, studies by Harverson et al. (2025) and Twenge & Campbell (2018) indicated that intensive screen-based activities may gradually displace essential developmental experiences such as collaborative play, direct peer interaction, and social problem-solving. These findings suggest that digital environments increasingly function as alternative socialization spaces that compete with traditional forms of child interaction within families and schools.

The increasing intensity of online game consumption among elementary school children has also become evident in Indonesia. Several national studies have reported that online gaming among school-aged children contributes to behavioral changes, including verbal aggression, emotional instability, declining academic focus, and reduced social sensitivity (Larasati et al., 2023; Rustina et al., 2025). Kiniret & Susilowati (2021) further revealed that approximately 10.15% of Indonesian school-aged children exhibit characteristics of online game addiction, particularly in relation to self-control and emotional dependency. These conditions indicate that online gaming has evolved from an individual recreational activity into a broader educational and psychosocial concern requiring serious scholarly attention.

This phenomenon was also observable at SD IT Al-Husnayain, an Islamic-based elementary school located in Panyabungan, Mandailing Natal Regency. Preliminary observations and interviews conducted in December 2025 revealed that approximately 75% of students in grades III–VI regularly engaged in online gaming activities for one to three hours daily using personal digital devices. Teachers and parents reported that some students demonstrated excessive emotional attachment to online games, including difficulties controlling playing time, heightened emotional reactions when interrupted, and aggressive verbal expressions following competitive gaming experiences. Moreover, students frequently incorporated gaming-related language, competitive narratives, and

virtual interaction patterns into their everyday communication at school. These tendencies raise concerns regarding potential shifts in children's social character, particularly in terms of empathy, emotional control, cooperation, and interpersonal sensitivity.

Although several previous studies have explored the relationship between online gaming and children's behavior, most previous research has predominantly focused on quantitative correlations between gaming intensity and behavioral outcomes, often within general educational settings (Alfarizky, 2024; Azima et al., 2025; Handila, 2021). Limited attention has been given to contextual and interpretive analyses that examine how online gaming influences children's social character development within specific cultural and institutional environments, particularly in Islamic elementary schools that emphasize moral education and social values. Furthermore, few studies have integrated Erikson's psychosocial development framework to interpret the social implications of online gaming in elementary education contexts.

This study seeks to analyze the impact of online gaming on the social development of fourth-grade students at SD IT Al-Husnayain through the lens of Erikson's psychosocial theory. The novelty of this study lies in three main aspects. First, this research provides a contextualized qualitative analysis of children's social behavior within an Islamic elementary school environment in a rural Indonesian setting, an area that remains underexplored in previous studies. Second, this study integrates empirical observations of online gaming behavior with Erikson's psychosocial developmental framework to explain how virtual interaction influences the formation of children's social competence and emotional regulation. Third, this study contributes to the growing discourse on digital childhood and character education by emphasizing the importance of balancing children's digital experiences with real-world social interaction within elementary education.

B. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017), aiming to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of social character shifts among children as a result of online game usage within the context of elementary education. The qualitative approach was selected because the study does

not primarily focus on quantitative measurement, but rather on exploring meanings, behavioral patterns, and the dynamics of students' social interactions as they naturally occur in the school environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The case study design was considered appropriate because the research focused on a single educational setting, namely SD IT Al-Husnayain in Panyabungan, Mandailing Natal Regency, allowing for a comprehensive contextual analysis of the phenomenon under investigation. The primary research subjects were fourth-grade students, as children at this age are situated within Erikson's psychosocial developmental stage of industry versus inferiority, in which the development of social competence, self-confidence, and the ability to cooperate with peers constitutes a critical developmental task.

Data collection was conducted through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation (Bachiochi & Weiner, 2004). To strengthen methodological clarity, this study employed several specific indicators during the data collection process. In the observation stage, the indicators included: (1) students' intensity of online game use, such as frequency and duration of playing; (2) patterns of social interaction among students, including cooperation, peer communication, and participation in group activities; (3) verbal behaviors, such as the use of aggressive language, teasing, or verbal conflict after gaming activities; (4) emotional regulation, including students' ability to control anger, frustration, and emotional reactions during classroom interaction; and (5) behavioral tendencies related to social withdrawal, empathy, and responsiveness toward peers. Observations were conducted during classroom learning activities, recess periods, and informal interactions within the school environment.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with fourth-grade teachers and parents to obtain information regarding changes in students' social behavior associated with online gaming activities. The interview indicators included: (1) children's gaming habits at home; (2) parental supervision and control over digital device use; (3) perceived emotional changes after gaming; (4) children's communication patterns with peers and family members; (5) tendencies toward tantrums, aggressiveness, or conflict behavior; and (6) the influence of online games on students' learning motivation and social

participation. Documentation was used as supporting evidence, including field notes, interview transcripts, and observational records related to students' social behavior.

Data analysis was carried out using a descriptive-analytical technique involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings were then interpreted using Erikson's psychosocial development theory and supported by relevant previous studies concerning children's digital behavior and social-emotional development (Walker & Venker Weidenbenner, 2019). To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study applied source triangulation and methodological triangulation by comparing observational data, interview results, and supporting documentation. This process enhanced the validity, credibility, and consistency of the research findings.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Intensity of Online Game Use Among Students at SD IT Al-Husnayain

The results of field observations and interviews with fourth-grade classroom teachers and parents indicate that online game use has become a routine activity in the daily lives of most students. The empirical data presented in Table 1 show that 62% of students play online games at home on a daily basis, while 45% spend more than two hours per day engaging in gaming activities. This level of intensity is considered high for elementary school-aged children and exceeds the duration recommended by child development experts. These findings suggest that online gaming has become a significant part of elementary students' daily routines and has begun to influence various aspects of their social and emotional development.

Table 1. Intensity of Online Game Use at SD IT Al-Husnayain

No	Assessment Aspects	Percentage (%)
1	Students frequently play online games at home every day	62%
2	Students report playing online games for more than 2 hours per day	45%
3	Teachers report verbal conflicts after gaming activities	38%
4	Parents observe more frequent tantrums in their children	29%

Based on the table above, the high intensity of online game use indicates the occurrence of a displacement effect, namely the displacement of essential developmental activities such as physical play, reading, and direct social interaction with peers and family members (Clemente-Suárez et al., 2024). In the context of elementary school-aged

children's development, this condition potentially reduces opportunities for children to practice fundamental social skills, including cooperation, empathy, and interpersonal communication, which are expected to develop optimally through real-life social interactions (Aspandi et al., 2025; Rifayanti et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the empirical data presented in Table 1 show that 38% of teachers reported the emergence of verbal conflicts among students after engaging in online gaming, while 29% of parents observed an increase in tantrums and emotional outbursts at home, particularly when children were asked to stop playing. As noted by Apriliyani (2020) and Yuliani et al. (2025), these findings indicate that the intensity of online game use affects not only children's time management patterns but also their emotional stability and the quality of their social relationships, both in school and family environments.

These findings indicate that online game usage has become a significant part of students' daily lives and has begun to noticeably influence their social interaction patterns, including outdoor play with peers, reading activities, and group study. Furthermore, fourth-grade teachers reported that children frequently imitate the language they encounter while playing online games, including the use of harsh terms or mocking expressions, which subsequently emerge in their interactions both at school and outside the school environment.

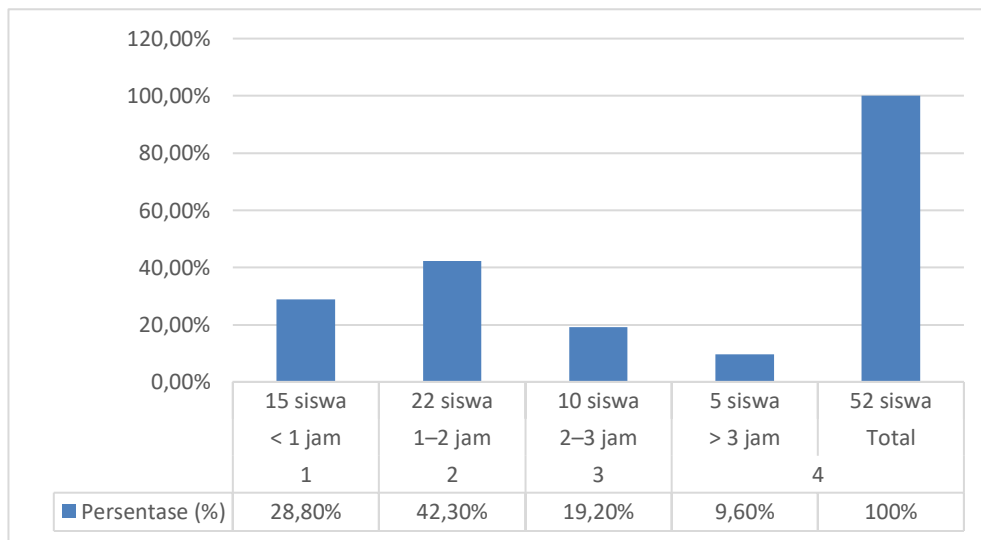


Figure 1. Daily Duration of Online Game Use Among Students

Based on the figure above, it can be observed that online gaming has become a fairly dominant activity in the daily routines of fourth-grade students at SD IT Al-Husnayain. The majority of students (42.3%) spend between one and two hours per day playing online games, while 28.8% of students play for less than one hour per day. Although some students remain within a relatively moderate duration of game use, these findings still warrant careful attention, as nearly one-third of the students (28.8%) are reported to play online games for more than two hours per day, which is considered a high duration for elementary school-aged children in child development studies. This distribution pattern indicates that online gaming is no longer merely a leisure activity but has become a routine practice with the potential to affect time allocation, social interaction patterns, and the balance of students' social-emotional development.

These findings indicate that online games affect not only children's time management but also shift their patterns of communication, emotional regulation, and the quality of social interactions. From the perspective of Erikson's psychosocial development theory (1959), this condition is particularly critical because elementary school-aged children are situated in the industry versus inferiority stage, a phase in which the development of social competence and self-confidence is achieved through successful engagement in social and academic tasks.

When most of children's experiences of achievement are obtained through virtual environments, while real-life social interactions are instead characterized by conflict and emotional tension, the formation of healthy social character is likely to be disrupted. Children may experience an imbalance between virtual self-confidence and real-world social skills, which ultimately affects the quality of their social relationships and self-concept. These findings are consistent with studies by Larasati et al. (2023) and Rustina et al. (2025), which report that children with high durations of online game use tend to show decreased quality of social interactions and reduced participation in constructive non-digital activities.

Thus, the findings at SD IT Al-Husnayain consistently demonstrated that high levels of online gaming intensity have become a significant factor in the shift of children's social character. The observed impacts extend beyond time management issues to

encompass changes in communication patterns, emotional regulation, and the quality of social interactions in both school and family settings. These results underscore the urgency of implementing systematic and collaborative character education interventions grounded in children's psychosocial developmental stages, in order to support balanced and healthy social character development amid the challenges of the digital era.

The Impact of Online Games on Children's Social Interaction and Emotional

Beyond its effects on time management, the intensity of online game use also demonstrates a significant impact on students' social behavior and emotional stability. Data presented in Table 1 indicate that 38% of teachers reported an increase in verbal conflicts among students following online gaming activities, manifested in forms such as mutual teasing, the use of harsh language, and a reduced ability to regulate emotions during classroom interactions. Meanwhile, 29% of parents observed the emergence of tantrums and emotional outbursts at home, particularly when children were asked to stop playing games or shift their attention to other activities.

These behaviors suggest that children experience difficulties in managing their emotions and adapting to social demands outside the virtual environment. According to Fitri Nugroho et al. (2023), harsh language, mocking expressions, and aggressive communication patterns imitated from online game interactions often reappear in school settings, both during playtime and classroom learning activities. This condition indicates that social experiences in digital spaces do not always align with the communication norms expected within elementary education environments. These findings reinforce previous studies by Alfarizky (2024) and Handila (2021), which emphasize that competitive and confrontational game content can increase tendencies toward verbal aggression and weaken children's emotional control, particularly in the absence of adequate parental and teacher supervision. In this context, children function not merely as passive consumers but as active participants in virtual interaction systems that frequently promote competitive values unbalanced by healthy social norms.

A study by Izzah et al. (2024) involving fourth-grade students at SDN 39 Palembang reinforces these findings by demonstrating that habitual online gaming can hinder children's overall personality development. The identified impacts include

increased rebellious behavior, a tendency to challenge the authority of teachers and parents, involvement in physical conflicts with peers, as well as the development of individualistic attitudes and reduced social concern. A similar view is expressed by Walker & Venker Weidenbenner (2019), who argue that social experiences acquired by children in virtual environments have begun to replace the internalization of social values that should be developed through direct interaction in real-life settings.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Azima et al. (2025) reveals that excessive online game use disrupts the quality of children's social interactions, as time previously spent playing with peers, communicating with family members, and engaging in collaborative activities is increasingly displaced by solitary digital engagement. According to Dwibowo et al. (2024), this shift not only reduces the intensity of social interaction but also weakens children's empathic skills, including their ability to understand others' emotions, manage conflicts, and build respectful interpersonal relationships. As a result, children become more prone to social withdrawal, decreased tolerance, and difficulties in cooperating during group-based learning situations at school.

In line with these findings, Romadany & Dananier (2024) emphasized that high levels of online game engagement are correlated with a decline in learning motivation and a deterioration in the quality of children's social relationships within the school environment. When a substantial portion of children's time and cognitive energy is absorbed by digital gaming activities, attention to academic tasks, interaction with teachers, and social relationships with peers tends to be marginalized. Over time, this condition may lead to an imbalance in social-emotional development, which can negatively affect character formation, particularly during the elementary school years—a critical period for the development of self-discipline, responsibility, and social skills.

Nevertheless, previous findings do not entirely position online games as a solely negative influence. A study by Setiadi & Khairunnisa (2025) indicates that the use of gadget-based online games in a limited, structured manner and under active supervision by teachers and parents can function as a motivating learning medium. Within pedagogically designed learning contexts, online games have the potential to enhance students' active engagement, stimulate curiosity, and encourage participation in the

learning process (Li et al., 2024). Therefore, the impact of online games on children's social and academic development is largely determined by patterns of use, duration, and the quality of adult guidance, rather than by the mere presence of games themselves (Aspandi et al., 2025). This perspective underscores the importance of an educational approach that positions digital technology as a tool for strengthening learning and character development, rather than as a threat that must be entirely avoided.

Taken together, these empirical findings confirm that online games are not merely a form of entertainment but constitute an environmental factor that significantly shapes children's social behavior patterns. Uncontrolled use has been shown to contribute to shifts in social values, reduced empathy, increased interpersonal conflict, and weakened social relationships within both school and family settings. This condition reinforces the urgency of adopting educational approaches that not only prioritize academic achievement but also emphasize systematic and sustainable character education and social-emotional well-being.

Erikson's Psychosocial Perspective on the Shift in Children's Social Character

According to Erikson (1959), human development involves a series of psychosocial crises that must be resolved at each stage of life. During the elementary school years (approximately ages 6–12), children are situated in the stage of industry versus inferiority. At this stage, children learn to develop skills, productivity, and competence in both social and academic tasks, while simultaneously building self-confidence within their social environment. Children who successfully navigate this stage with adequate support from parents and teachers tend to develop a sense of competence and confidence, whereas those who fail to do so may experience feelings of inferiority or low self-worth.

Within the framework of Erikson's psychosocial development theory (Erikson, 1959), elementary school-aged children including fourth-grade students at SD IT Al-Husnayain are positioned in the industry versus inferiority stage, a critical phase in which they strive to construct a sense of competence, self-confidence, and self-esteem through successful engagement in social and academic tasks (McLeod, 2018). At this stage,

experiences of success in completing tasks and the recognition of children's efforts by their social environment (teachers, peers, and parents) are fundamental to the development of self-belief and prosocial behavior (Mutiara et al., 2024). Conversely, when social support is limited or children's experiences are dominated by persistent criticism, ridicule, or interpersonal conflict, they are at risk of developing feelings of inferiority or perceiving themselves as less competent than their peers (Thompson et al., 2015).

In the context of child development influenced by digital environments, many contemporary researchers argue that the role of the social environment is no longer limited to face-to-face interactions but also includes experiences gained through virtual activities. For example, in studies on online gaming and children's social development, Gill (2025) noted that intensive digital interactions can provide competitive feedback that shapes children's self-concept. When children frequently receive rewards in games without being balanced by experiences of success in real-world social interactions, this imbalance may lead to a heightened sense of competence in virtual environments alongside limited social functioning in real-life contexts.

Furthermore, research by Câmpean et al. (2024) highlights the importance of supportive feedback from adults in reinforcing competent and cooperative attitudes among elementary school-aged children, particularly in collaborative task settings. Teacher support that encourages project-based learning, recognition of students' efforts, and parental guidance in managing online gaming activities at home can strengthen children's self-efficacy and mitigate the negative effects of technology use on interpersonal relationships. In contrast, Bhagat et al. (2020) emphasized that a lack of positive social engagement in both physical and digital spaces can reinforce feelings of inferiority, which are ultimately associated with lower learning motivation and a tendency to withdraw from constructive social interactions.

The findings of this study indicated that the arena for the development of children's sense of competence has begun to shift from real social environments to the virtual world. Children increasingly gain recognition, status, and a sense of achievement through accomplishments in online games, while social interactions in real-life contexts are often marked by conflict, frustration, and emotional tension. This imbalance has the potential

to hinder the healthy resolution of psychosocial crises. As noted by Handila (2021) and Ramadhoni & Kholidin (2025), children who rely excessively on virtual experiences of success tend to encounter difficulties adapting to real-world social situations that require empathy, cooperation, and self-regulation. In the long term, this condition may lead to a shift in children's social character from adaptive patterns toward less healthy.

In the context of SD IT Al-Husnayain, teachers and the school environment have played a critical role in facilitating children's social development amid the increasing intensity of digital interactions. Teachers are not only expected to transmit academic knowledge but also to create a learning ecosystem that bridges children's virtual experiences with the social values cultivated in real-world contexts. According to Hasriani et al. (2025), a supportive learning environment should be deliberately designed to provide children with opportunities to reflect on their digital experiences while simultaneously training them to practice cooperation, empathy, assertive communication, and appreciation of both effort and outcomes in academic and social settings.

An integrated social and emotional learning (SEL) approach embedded in daily instructional practices has been shown to be an effective strategy for supporting the adaptive resolution of the psychosocial crisis of industry versus inferiority (Amri, 2025). Through collaborative activities, project-based learning, reflective discussions, and the provision of constructive feedback, children gain meaningful experiences of success that are socially recognized. These findings are consistent with Jones et al. (2017), who demonstrated that sustained programs aimed at strengthening social and emotional skills significantly contribute to an increased sense of competence, improved quality of interpersonal relationships, and enhanced academic readiness among elementary school students. In other words, the reinforcement of SEL not only affects the affective domain but also strengthens the aspects of children's cognitive and academic development.

Thus, the use of digital technology, including online games, should not be viewed dichotomously as solely positive or negative, but rather as a phenomenon that must be managed from pedagogical and developmental perspectives. When children's digital experiences are guided, reflected upon, and integrated within a supportive learning environment, technology can serve as a means of strengthening social character and

psychosocial competence. Therefore, learning practices at SD IT Al-Husnayain should position social and emotional education as an integral component of learning strategies, enabling children to achieve a balance between digital achievements and real-world social success throughout their developmental process.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that online gaming has become an integral part of the daily lives of fourth-grade students at SD IT Al-Husnayain and has exerted a tangible influence on their social and emotional development. The high intensity of online game use is shown to contribute to a shift in children's social interaction patterns, as evidenced by an increase in verbal conflicts, the use of aggressive language, declining empathy, and weakened emotional regulation in both school and family environments. This phenomenon has also displaced essential developmental activities, such as face-to-face social interaction, cooperation, and engagement in collaborative learning activities. From the perspective of Erikson's psychosocial development theory, these findings affirm that elementary school students are situated in the industry versus inferiority stage, a critical phase in which children develop a sense of competence, self-confidence, and self-worth through successful social and academic experiences. When children's experiences of success are predominantly obtained through the virtual world of online games, while real-life social interactions are characterized by conflict and frustration, an imbalance in psychosocial development may occur. This condition has the potential to hinder the adaptive resolution of psychosocial crises and, in the long term, to foster feelings of inferiority and social inadequacy.

Nevertheless, this study also emphasized that online games are not inherently or deterministically negative. Their impact is largely shaped by patterns of use, duration, and the quality of adult supervision. When online gaming is used in a structured and limited manner, accompanied by active guidance from teachers and parents, it can be harnessed as a motivating learning medium that enhances student engagement and enriches learning experiences when pedagogically integrated. Therefore, the primary challenge

lies not in the presence of digital technology itself, but in how such technology is managed within the broader ecosystem of children's education.

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