

# The Effects of Digital Gaming Communities on Youth Communication

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## Abstract

Digital gaming communities have grown in popularity among young people, serving as platforms for engagement, collaboration, and communication. These communities go beyond entertainment, encouraging social relationships, teamwork, and shared experiences. In addition, gaming helps young people form social relationships, improve their communication skills, and engage in collaborative problem-solving. Furthermore, as online gaming environments improve, they offer a platform for users to communicate, express themselves, and form meaningful relationships where this contact contributes to a larger digital culture, influencing how young people communicate and connect in virtual places. This study seeks to examine how digital gaming communities affect youth communication, focusing on three major areas, gaming frequency, social skills, and peer connections. Based on Social Presence Theory, this study investigates how virtual interactions within gaming communities influence communication patterns. Besides that, a quantitative research design was used, with data collected from 353 students from the Faculty of Computer and Mathematical Sciences at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Shah Alam. Moreover, the study used structured questionnaires to collect data, which was then analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis to discover the correlations between the independent and dependent variables. Finally, this study contributes to the field of communication studies by expanding our understanding of Social Presence Theory in digital gaming contexts.

## Keywords

Digital Gaming Communities, Youth Communication, Gaming Frequency, Social Skills, Peer Relationships and Social Presence Theory

## 1. Introduction

Digital gaming communities have become an essential aspect of current youth culture, influencing entertainment preferences, social interactions, and communication patterns. As online multiplayer games and gaming platforms expand, they create digital environments in which young people can interact, communicate, and form connections. This phenomenon has sparked a greater interest in studying how involvement in these networks influences young communication.

Malaysia's National Youth Development Policy defines youth as the transitory stage between childhood and maturity, typically including those aged 15 to 40. However, definitions might vary depending on cultural and societal situations. In this study, youth refer to people of this age who actively participate in digital gaming communities and whose gaming experience may influence communication abilities. Advances in digital technology have substantially impacted teenage communication, particularly through gaming communities that enable real-time engagement via voice chat, messaging platforms, and collaborative games. These platforms function as social arenas where people from various backgrounds connect, negotiate, and develop relationships, impacting their communication skills and behaviors. According to Anderson et al, online gaming communities encourage various communication styles, including cooperative problem-solving and strategic conversations, which can improve social relationships. Meanwhile, digital gaming communities provide chances for social interaction, concerns have been raised about their possible effects on communication efficacy, social skills, and peer relationships.

Secondly, the study seeks to understand how social skills are influenced in gaming contexts, as these platforms encourage teamwork, leadership, and bargaining. In addition, multiplayer games can help players improve interpersonal skills, especially when they need to coordinate strategies and form alliances. At the same time, concerns have been voiced concerning gaming's social isolation, where players may favor virtual contact over real-world communication (Przybylski and Weinstein, 2019). Finally, the study aims to investigate the relationship between peer relationships and the effects of digital gaming communities on teenage communication, taking into account how online interactions influence social connectivity and group dynamics. On the other hand, by addressing these objectives, this study hopes to shed light on the impact of digital gaming communities in influencing young people's communication skills. The findings will help to deepen our understanding of gaming's social ramifications and influence future talks about how to balance digital connections with traditional forms of communication development. The project will also expand on previous research to provide a full examination of the benefits and challenges of gaming communities, as well as their impact on young communication.

As digital gaming communities expand, their impact on juvenile communication remains a source of controversy. While some claim that these platforms offer valuable social contacts and chances for skill development, others are concerned about the potential negative implications, such as decreased face-to-face communication and social isolation. Despite the increasing participation of youth in gaming communities, there has been little research on how these digital spaces influence their communication patterns, particularly in terms of gaming frequency, social skills, and peer relationships.

In addition, one big issue is the uncertainty about whether gaming improves or degrades communication abilities. Meanwhile online games promote teamwork and strategic interactions, excessive gaming may result in decreased real-world social involvement, compromising the capacity to converse successfully in offline contexts. Furthermore, it is unclear if gaming promotes social skill development or encourages a preference for digital contacts over traditional social interactions. Furthermore, peer interactions in digital gaming groups are a complex dynamic. While online friendships can provide emotional support and social connection, they may also lead to a situation in which children value virtual interactions above in-person connections. This raises the question of whether such encounters improve or degrade overall communication skills among young people. As a result, this study aims to fill those gaps by investigating the relationship between digital gaming communities and juvenile communication. By examining the impacts of gaming frequency, social skills, and peer relationships on communication patterns, this study hopes to gain a better understanding of the benefits and drawbacks of juvenile participation in digital gaming communities

## **2. Literature Review**

Digital gaming communities have become into substantial social platforms where users engage, collaborate, and create relationships. As youth engagement in online communities increases, the impact on communication skills, socialization, and interpersonal interactions has been a subject of scholarly investigation. In addition, digital gaming communities, which include multiplayer online games, eSports, and gaming forums, provide interactive spaces for players to engage via in-game chat, voice communication, and external platforms like Discord. According to recent research, these networks foster social links and open up new channels of contact for young people. Adipat et al. (2021) argue that online games foster social learning by allowing players to discuss strategies, negotiate roles, and improve cooperation skills. According to research by Gonçalves et al. (2023), suggests that multiplayer online games foster significant social interactions and bonds, which frequently transcend beyond the virtual realm. In addition, Winaldo and Oktaviani (2022), discovered that online gaming promotes linguistic development, particularly among non-native speakers, as gamers interact in English or other frequently used languages to organize gameplay. Furthermore, online gaming communities encourage cooperation and leadership skills because players must collaborate to attain common goals (Liao et al., 2020). This is especially noticeable in team-based games like League of Legends and Dota 2, where effective communication is critical to success.

Despite their benefits, internet gaming communities present certain problems to youth communication which excessive gaming can diminish face-to-face interactions, resulting in social retreats (Xu et al., 2023). Additionally, some players grow overly reliant on virtual interactions, which might impair real-world communication abilities. Furthermore, online gaming environments frequently include incidents of harassment, cyberbullying, and abusive conduct. This exposure has the potential to alter youth communication patterns, making them more likely to engage in aggressive or confrontational conversation. While online text and voice chats facilitate communication, they may restrict the development of important verbal and nonverbal communication skills required for real-life encounters (Al-Turif & Al-Sanad, 2023)

Moreover, there are several factors that influence how young people communicate in digital gaming groups. According to Meriläinen (2022), moderate gaming can improve social connectivity, however excessive gaming may have a negative impact on communication results. Furthermore, the game's type influences the experience; role-playing games (RPGs) and multiplayer online battle arenas (MOBAs) frequently necessitate more strategic communication, whereas solo gaming may not offer the same advantages. The social context of young people, including parental direction and peer involvement, also influences how they communicate inside gaming groups (Meriläinen & Ruotsalainen, 2023). Digital gaming communities offer both opportunities and challenges for young communication. While they improve social interaction, language abilities, and teamwork, they also increase the risk of social isolation and exposure to harmful conduct. Understanding the balance of positive and negative consequences is critical for using gaming communities as a productive venue for youth communication development.

The frequency of gaming has a significant impact on juvenile communication. Several academics have investigated how time spent in gaming communities affects communication abilities and social relationships. According to Kitani et al. (2023), moderate gaming improves communication skills by allowing for consistent interaction with peers, facilitating problem-solving talks, and building collaboration in team settings. Players who engage in regular but balanced gaming tend to improve their verbal and nonverbal communication abilities.

However, excessive gaming has been connected to communication issues. Juthamane and Gunawan (2021) discovered that kids who spend excessive hours in digital gaming communities may acquire social retreat tendencies, diminishing face-to-face interactions and resulting in lower real-world speaking abilities. Furthermore, continuous exposure to gaming environments may lead to communication styles that prioritize hostility or short-form responses, particularly in competitive gaming contexts. This alteration in communication habits may extend beyond the gaming environment, influencing relationships in educational and professional settings. On the other side, several research contend that frequent participation in gaming communities promotes adaptability and flexibility in communication. According to Akin (2023), gamers who frequently participate in multiplayer environments gain skills in rapid information processing, dispute resolution, and strategic communication, which can improve their capacity to communicate in dynamic social circumstances. Furthermore, structured communication in team-based games allows players to learn leadership skills, delegation, and collaborative problem-solving (Servat, 2024).

Hakia (2024) found that frequent participation in gaming communities can promote social connectivity when combined with offline contacts. Youth who strike a healthy balance between gaming and real-life communication activities are more likely to gain from gaming's social components while avoiding severe negative consequences. The findings indicate that frequency alone does not determine the effects of digital gaming communities on communication rather, the quality of interactions and the context in which they occur are critical factors. While frequent gaming can improve communication skills in the correct conditions, it also raises worries about digital dependency and its possible negative consequences. According to Ruben et al. (2021), excessive reliance on gaming as a primary means of communication can impede the development of interpersonal skills required in professional and academic settings. Furthermore, kids that spend long hours gaming may struggle to discriminate between online and offline communication standards (Bu & Ding, 2024). The long-term implications of regular gaming on communication habits are still being debated, with some academics pushing for regulated gaming time to maximize benefits while reducing hazards. According to Park et al. (2024), the researcher looks into the psychological impact of high-frequency gaming on juvenile communication behaviors.

They emphasize that players who engage in prolonged gaming sessions may feel cognitive fatigue, limiting their capacity to properly explain concepts and engage in meaningful conversations outside of gaming situations. This conclusion implies that, while digital gaming communities offer opportunities for communication growth, they must be integrated into a balanced lifestyle to prevent potential downsides. The relationship between gaming frequency and the impact of digital gaming communities on youth communication is complex. Moderate gaming improves communication skills, social bonding, and teamwork; however, excessive gaming can lead to communication issues and social retreat. Multiple factors influence gaming frequency, including game genre, social setting, and the ratio of online to offline interactions. Understanding these interactions is critical for exploiting digital gaming communities' positive influence on youth communication.

Future research should look into the long-term effects of frequent gaming on communication skills, as well as the impact of educational interventions in encouraging good gaming habits.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

Social Presence Theory, first introduced by Short, Williams, and Christie (1976) investigates how people perceive connection, engagement, and immediacy in mediated communication. According to the notion, communication success is determined by how well a given medium conveys social cues, emotions, and personal participation. Social Presence Theory, which was first designed to evaluate telecommunications, has since been widely applied to digital interactions, including virtual environments like social networking, video conferencing, and digital gaming communities. In the context of this study, Social Presence Theory is especially useful in explaining how digital gaming communities influence teenage communication since it provides insights into how players connect, create relationships, and develop communication skills online.

A major concept of Social Presence Theory is that different communication media differ in their potential to elicit psychological proximity. The availability of verbal and nonverbal indicators such as tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language in traditional face-to-face conversations naturally increases social presence. However, in digital environments, social presence is determined by the richness of the medium used. Gaming communities use a variety of communication mechanisms, including in-game text chat, voice chat, video streaming, and external platforms such as Discord, all of which contribute to different levels of perceived social presence. Studies have demonstrated that communication modalities that allow for real-time, multimodal engagement, such as voice chat and video, provide a stronger social presence than text-based communication alone (Gazi et al., 2024). This shows that the quality and manner of communication in gaming communities have a substantial impact on how young people interact with one another and improve their communication skills.

One of the most important ways Social Presence Theory applies to digital gaming communities is through its impact on social skills and peer connections. When youth play online multiplayer games, they frequently engage in team-based activities that necessitate coordination, cooperation, and strategic conversations. These interactions mimic real-world social dynamics, allowing users to hone and improve their communication abilities. In addition, kids who actively participate in gaming communities with a strong social presence improve their verbal and nonverbal communication abilities, particularly in leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving scenarios. The immersive quality of these settings encourages a sense of belonging, allowing users to form meaningful relationships and social connections that can extend beyond the virtual realm into real-world encounters (Jones, 2024).

Furthermore, Social Presence Theory explains the link between gaming frequency, social skills, and peer relationships. Youth who frequently participate in gaming communities generally develop strong digital communication skills, which can lead to better social connections in both online and offline settings. According to Vnucko et al. (2024), individuals who participate in gaming communities on a regular basis are more confident in expressing themselves, settling problems, and negotiating team responsibilities. However, the advantages of social presence in gaming groups are heavily reliant on the mix of online and offline interactions. While modest participation in digital gaming communities might improve communication skills, relying solely on online gaming for social engagement may result in decreased real-world communication abilities and difficulty in face-to-face encounters.

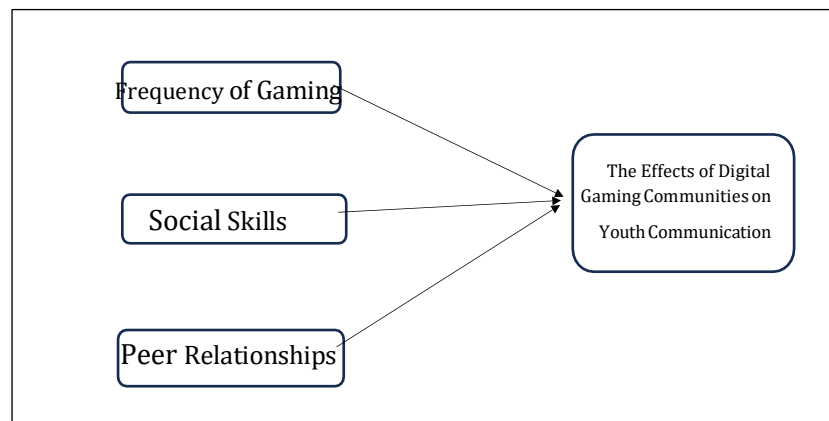
Social Presence Theory also offers a framework for analyzing the emotional and psychological effects of digital gaming communities on teenage communication. In high-social-presence contexts, gamers may form stronger emotional bonds with their gaming peers, leading to improved empathy, trust, and collaboration. This is especially visible in cooperative and role-playing games, in which players must collaborate to attain common goals. Toh and Kirschner (2022) discovered that youth who frequently participate in socially interactive gaming environments have higher emotional intelligence and better capacity to negotiate social interactions. However, the study also highlighted possible drawbacks, such as the risk of emotional dependency on online contacts, which can occasionally substitute in-person encounters and impede the development of offline social skills.

Another significant part of Social Presence Theory in gaming communities is how it affects peer relationships. In gaming environments with high social presence, gamers frequently develop close-knit communities based on shared interests and collaborative experiences. These peer interactions can be valuable social support systems for young people, helping them establish a feeling of identity and belonging. For example, Erdogan (2023) observed that online gaming communities provide a safe haven for people who may struggle with social interactions in traditional contexts, such as introverted or socially nervous youth. Despite these possible limitations, Social Presence Theory supports the notion that when handled properly, digital gaming communities can serve as excellent platforms for communication growth. The idea suggests that the frequency of gaming, the quality of social contacts, and the amount of participation all contribute to the overall impact of gaming communities on youth communication. This study examines these elements to better understand how gaming communities' impact juvenile communication practices and if they serve as a supplement or alternative for

traditional social connections.

Finally, Social Presence Theory provides a solid theoretical foundation for studying the impact of digital gaming communities on juvenile communication. It emphasizes the importance of communication media in determining social presence, the impact of gaming on social skills and peer connections, and the balance of online and offline interactions. Using this idea, the study attempts to investigate how youth communicate inside digital gaming groups and how these interactions affect their overall social development. Understanding the dynamics of social presence in gaming communities can provide useful insights into the benefits and drawbacks of using digital gaming as a social platform, ultimately leading to a more thorough understanding of young communication in the digital era.

**Fig. 1: Research framework**



#### 4. Methodology

The questionnaire is organized into five sections, each meant to capture various components of the study. Firstly, part A collects demographic information about respondents, including their gender, age, and level of education. These characteristics give context to the participants' gaming and communication experiences. Next, part B investigates the effects of digital gaming communities on youth communication, the study's dependent variable. This section assesses how gaming communities influence communication abilities, both online and offline. It looks into things like confidence in starting conversations, the capacity to express ideas effectively, and the significance of games in preserving social bonds. Responses were measured on the same 5-point Likert scale.

Part C investigates the frequency of gaming. This section includes 15 questions that examine how frequently respondents engage in digital gaming activities. Understanding gaming frequency is critical because it reveals the level of exposure to gaming communities and their possible impact on communication. Respondents answer these questions on a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), providing a more detailed view of their gaming behaviors. The second independent variable, social skills, is examined in Part D. This section has 20 questions that seek to assess whether gaming helps individuals acquire crucial social characteristics such as teamwork, cooperation, and confidence in dealing with others. The 5-point Likert scale is used to assess participants' perceptions of how gaming affects their capacity to interact and collaborate with others. Finally, Part E examines the third independent variable, peer relationships which includes 20 questions. This section evaluates the impact of digital gaming communities on social relationships and friendships. It investigates whether gaming promotes meaningful connections, emotional support, and a sense of belonging in gamers. Understanding how gaming promotes peer interactions helps the larger discussion of digital networks as modern social spaces. Respondents again utilize a 5-point Likert scale to indicate their level of agreement with each statement. This study will be conducted at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Shah Alam. As Malaysia's largest public institution, UiTM has been instrumental in expanding higher education possibilities, notably for Bumiputera students.

Respondents for this study included students from UiTM Shah Alam's FSKM. This is because of their academic background in computing and technology, many students are familiar with digital platforms, such as online gaming communities. Because digital gaming communities serve as platforms for engagement, collaboration, and communication, FSKM students can offer vital insights into how these communities influence young communication habits. Their experiences and viewpoints will serve to advance our understanding of the role of digital gaming in molding young people's social skills, peer connections, and communication practices.

## 5.0 Result and Discussion

This subtopic covered the respondents' profiles in this study's response. Table 1 shows the respondent's demographic including gender, age, and level of study. The table indicates that 385 people responded to the survey with 237 (67.1%) Male and 116 (32.9%) Female. For the age category, Table 1 shows that the biggest group of respondents 172 (48.7%) of the respondents were aged between 21 until 23 years old. followed by 91 (25.8%) between the ages of 24 until 26, and followed by 55 (15.6%) aged between 27 until 30. Meanwhile, 35 (9.9%) respondents are between the ages of 18 until 20. According to Table 1, 78 (22.1%) of respondents had a diploma. Aside from that, 230 respondents (65.2%) have a bachelor's degree, while 45 (12.7%) have a master's degree.

**Table 1: Frequency of the respondents**

Demography Factors		n	%
Gender			
i)	Male	237	67.1
ii)	Female	116	32.9
Age			
i)	18 – 20 years old	35	9.9%
ii)	21 – 23 years old	172	48.7%
iii)	24 – 26 years old	91	25.8%
iv)	27 – 30 years old	55	15.6%
Level of Study			
i)	Diploma	78	22.1%
ii)	Bachelor's degree	230	65.2%
iii)	Master's degree	45	12.7%

In this section, the differences between the Frequency of Gaming and the effects of Digital Gaming Communities on Youth Communication will be explained as the study's first objective is to examine the relationship between these two variables. This revealed a strong relationship between the Frequency of Gaming and the effects of Digital Gaming Communities on Youth Communication, with a significant value or ( $r = .775$ ,  $p > 0.01$ ). The result in Table 2 indicated that these two factors will have an impact on one another, therefore, the hypothesis is accepted.

**Table 2: Correlation between the Frequency of Gaming and the effects of Digital Gaming Communities on Youth Communication**

The Frequency of Gaming	The Effects of Digital Gaming Communities on Youth Communication
r	.775**
n	353
p	.001

The second objective of the study is to examine the relationship between Social Skills and the effects of Digital



Gaming Communities on Youth Communication, hence in this part, the hypothesis between Social Skills and the effects of Digital Gaming Communities on Youth Communication will be discussed. This revealed a strong relationship between Social Skills and the effects of Digital Gaming Communities on Youth Communication, with a significant value of ( $r = .881, p > 0.01$ ). The result in Table 3 indicated that these two factors will connect. Thus, the hypothesis is accepted.

**Table 3: Correlation between Social Skills and the effects of Digital Gaming Communities on Youth Communication**

Social Skills	The Effects of Digital Gaming Communities on Youth Communication
r	.881**
n	353
p	.001

The third objective of the study is to examine the relationship between Peer Relationships and the effects of Digital Gaming Communities on Youth Communication, hence in this part, the hypothesis between Peer Relationships and the effects of Digital Gaming Communities on Youth Communication will be discussed. This revealed a strong relationship between Peer Relationships and the effects of Digital Gaming Communities on Youth Communication, with a significant value of ( $r = .921, p > 0.01$ ). The result in Table 4 indicated that these two elements correlated. Thus, the hypothesis is accepted.

**Table 4: Correlation between Peer Relationships and the effects of Digital Gaming Communities on Youth Communication**

Peer Relationships	The Effects of Digital Gaming Communities on Youth Communication
r	.921**
n	353
p	.001

## 5. Conclusion

According to the study's findings, young communication is significantly impacted by online gaming communities. Strong correlations between communication, peer relationships, social skills, and gaming frequency imply that gaming has a significant influence on how young people engage with others. This study emphasizes that online gaming communities serve as a venue for social interaction in addition to being a source of enjoyment. Through peer interactions, multiplayer teamwork, and strategic gaming conversations, young people who actively participate in these networks improve their communication abilities.

Furthermore, the study indicates that gaming is not age-specific because young people interact with others from different backgrounds, promoting a variety of social relationships. These results provide credence to the notion that online gaming groups act as a conduit for improving interpersonal skills and social connections. The study also confirms that gaming frequency is strongly related to the effects of digital gaming communities on youth communication. This means that youth who play games on a regular basis are more likely to have an impact on their communication habits. This may be demonstrated in how gaming promotes collaboration, teamwork, and strategic thinking, which may lead to better social interactions outside of gaming situations. As digital gaming communities expand, schools, parents, and governments must recognize their role in forming communication habits and explore methods to use gaming as a tool for constructive social development.

Besides that, the researcher emphasizes how youth communication in online gaming communities is correlated with social skills. This is because gaming communities provide young people with opportunities to hone their social skills. Players must effectively organize, negotiate, and interact with others in many multiplayer games, which strengthens leadership, empathy, and flexibility. These results suggest that gaming communities are useful settings for social learning in addition to being places for amusement. These advantages could be increased by

promoting responsible gaming practices and including communication-based activities in games.

Finally, the study found that digital gaming groups had a considerable influence on peer relationships. The high association between these variables shows that gaming helps kids form social bonds, allowing them to connect with people who share their interests. Online gaming allows for engagement across geographical borders, resulting in friendships and networks that would not have established otherwise. While these communities provide pleasant social contacts, it is important to ensure that they also encourage healthy and lasting connections. Stakeholders, including game makers and mental health specialists, should examine measures to limit potential negative impacts, such as gaming addiction and social isolation.

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