

Emotional Gratification as a Predictor of Internet and Gaming Disorder Tendency in Adolescent Roblox Users

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the effect of Emotional Gratification on Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD) among adolescent Roblox users in Malang City. A quantitative predictive research design was employed. The sample consisted of 96 adolescents aged 11–18 years who actively used Roblox and were selected through snowball sampling. Data were collected using the Emotional Gratification Scale, which measures enjoyment, escapism, social interaction, and achievement, and the Internet Gaming Disorder Scale based on DSM-5 criteria. The data were analyzed using simple linear regression. The results indicated that the data were normally distributed and that the relationship between variables was linear. Regression analysis revealed that Emotional Gratification had a positive and significant effect on Internet Gaming Disorder ($\beta = 0.547$; $t = 7.10$; $p < .001$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.349$) indicated that Emotional Gratification accounted for 34.9% of the variance in Internet Gaming Disorder. These findings suggest that higher emotional gratification obtained through Roblox is associated with a greater tendency toward Internet Gaming Disorder among adolescents.

Keywords

Gratification, Internet Gaming Disorder, Roblox, Adolescents, Online Gaming



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INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has significantly changed the activity and entertainment patterns of adolescents. One form of digital entertainment that has experienced rapid growth is online games. While digital games can provide benefits such as entertainment, social interaction, and creativity development, excessive use can lead to various negative impacts, one of which is Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD). The American Psychiatric Association (APA, 2013) defines IGD as a persistent and repetitive pattern of game use that causes significant impairment or distress in an individual's life. This condition is characterized by a loss of control over gaming

activities, an increased prioritization of gaming over other activities, and continued gaming despite negative consequences.

The phenomenon of IGD has attracted global attention due to its relatively high prevalence among adolescents and young adults. A meta-analysis conducted by Gao et al. (2022) showed that the global prevalence of IGD is approximately 9.9%. These findings indicate that excessive gaming is no longer an individual phenomenon but has become a mental health issue that requires serious attention. Various studies have shown that IGD is associated with low self-control, difficulty regulating emotions, anxiety, depression, loneliness, and problems in interpersonal relationships (Kardefelt-Winther, 2014; Stevens et al., 2021). Adolescence is a developmental period vulnerable to various forms of addictive behavior, including excessive gaming. During this phase, individuals experience biological, cognitive, and social changes that encourage them to seek new experiences, gain recognition from their environment, and establish a sense of self-identity. The presence of online games, which offer challenges, rewards, and opportunities to interact with others, often provides an attractive means for adolescents to meet these developmental needs.

One gaming platform that is very popular among teenagers today is Roblox. Unlike conventional games, Roblox is a user-generated content-based platform that allows users to build virtual worlds, interact with other players, and create digital identities through avatars. These characteristics make Roblox not only a medium for entertainment but also a social and emotional space for teenagers. Through various available features, players can have fun experiences, build social relationships, achieve specific goals in the game, and use games as a means of escape from the pressures of everyday life.

Roblox's popularity continues to grow because the platform allows users the freedom to not only play but also create gaming experiences tailored to their interests. The wide variety of game genres available allows players to find activities that suit their individual needs and preferences. Furthermore, Roblox's communication and collaboration features allow for the formation of virtual communities that provide a sense of community and social support for players. This phenomenon can be explained through the concept of Emotional Gratification. From the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), individuals actively choose media that can fulfill their psychological and social needs (Blumler & Katz, 1974). The satisfaction obtained from media use is called gratification. In the context of digital games, emotional gratification refers to the emotional satisfaction individuals

obtain through playing activities, such as feelings of pleasure, comfort, acceptance, success, and temporary relief from stress (Oliver, 2008; Ryan et al., 2006).

Previous research has shown that gaming as a means of escapism, seeking pleasure, and fulfilling emotional needs is significantly associated with problematic gaming behavior (Singh & Raut, 2022; Männikkö et al., 2020). Adolescents who derive high emotional gratification from gaming tend to use gaming as a primary source of emotional regulation, making them more susceptible to difficulties controlling gaming activities. Therefore, research into the influence of Emotional Gratification on Internet Gaming Disorder is important, particularly for adolescent Roblox users who are in a developmental phase characterized by a high need for social acceptance, achievement, and identity formation. This research is urgent because there are still limited studies specifically examining the relationship between Emotional Gratification and Internet Gaming Disorder among Roblox users in Indonesia. Yet, understanding the psychological factors that drive excessive gaming engagement is crucial for developing more effective prevention and intervention strategies. By understanding the role of emotional gratification in gaming behavior, various parties such as parents, educators, and mental health practitioners can provide more appropriate support to adolescents in using digital media in a healthy and balanced manner.

Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD) is a behavioral disorder characterized by excessive involvement in gaming activities that interferes with an individual's daily functioning. According to the DSM-5 (APA, 2013), IGD consists of nine main aspects: preoccupation, withdrawal symptoms, tolerance, loss of control, loss of interest, continued overuse, deception, escapism, and jeopardy/risking. Individuals with IGD generally exhibit difficulty controlling their gaming behavior, persist in gaming despite awareness of the negative consequences, and experience impairments in academic, social, and psychological functioning. The development of IGD is influenced by various factors, such as the characteristics of the game, the individual's psychological state, motivation for media use, and the social environment. Kuss and Griffiths (2020) explain that low self-control, loneliness, social anxiety, and poor emotional regulation are psychological factors that increase the risk of IGD. Furthermore, the characteristics of games that provide reward systems, social interaction, and immersive experiences also contribute to the emergence of excessive gaming behavior.

Emotional gratification is the emotional satisfaction individuals obtain through using media to fulfill specific psychological needs. This concept is rooted in Uses and

Gratifications Theory, which explains that individuals actively choose media that can provide benefits according to their needs (Blumler & Katz, 1974). In the context of digital games, emotional gratification is obtained through positive experiences that arise during play, such as pleasure, comfort, social connections, achievement, and escape from the pressures of everyday life.

This study adopts four aspects of Emotional Gratification developed based on research by Wu, Wang, and Tsai (2010): enjoyment, social interaction, and achievement. It also adds the escapism aspect based on research on motivations for using digital games. Enjoyment describes feelings of pleasure and entertainment during play. Escapism refers to using games as a means of reducing stress and avoiding real-life problems. Social interaction describes the satisfaction gained through relationships and communication with other players. Meanwhile, achievement relates to feelings of success, competence, and pride in achievements made in the game. These four aspects are sources of emotional satisfaction that can encourage player engagement. When emotional needs are repeatedly met through gaming, individuals tend to increase the frequency and duration of play, potentially increasing the risk of developing Internet Gaming Disorder.

The relationship between Emotional Gratification and Internet Gaming Disorder can be explained through the Uses and Gratifications theory and the Compensatory Internet Use model (Kardefelt-Winther, 2014). These theories explain that individuals use media to fulfill needs unmet in the real world. When gaming becomes a primary source of pleasure, comfort, social connection, and emotional escape, individuals become increasingly reliant on gaming to regulate their emotions.

In the context of Roblox, various features such as the reward system, virtual community, social interaction, and freedom of expression through avatars can generate strong emotional gratification. If this gratification becomes the primary source of emotional regulation, adolescents are at risk of developing a psychological attachment to the game, making it difficult to control their gaming activities. Therefore, the higher the emotional gratification adolescents receive through Roblox, the higher their likelihood of developing Internet Gaming Disorder..

METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with a predictive research design. Predictive design is used to test the ability of independent variables to predict or explain variables. The variables used in this study consist of: Independent Variable (X): Emotional Gratification. Dependent Variable (Y): Tendency to Internet Gaming

Disorder (IGD). Operational Definition of Internet and Gaming Disorder Variables is, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) through the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition (DSM-5) includes Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD) in Section III (Section III) as a condition that requires further clinical study and evidence. DSM-5 defines IGD as a persistent and recurrent pattern of internet game use, often played with other players, and causing clinically significant impairment or distress in various aspects of an individual's life functioning (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013).

The operational definition of the Emotional Gratification variable is the level of emotional satisfaction obtained by adolescents from playing Roblox, which includes feelings of pleasure, escapism, social interaction, and achievement in the game. Emotional Gratification in this study is based on the Uses and Gratifications theory proposed by Wu, Wang, and Tsai (2010). This theory explains that individuals use media, including online games, to fulfill various psychological needs and obtain certain satisfactions. The level of Emotional Gratification is measured based on the total score obtained by respondents on the Emotional Gratification scale. The higher the score obtained, the higher the level of emotional satisfaction felt from playing Roblox.

The instrument in this study used the Internet Gaming Disorder Tendency scale measured using a scale compiled based on the nine DSM-5 criteria from the American Psychiatric Association (2013), namely: Preoccupation, Withdrawal Symptoms, Tolerance, Loss of Control, Loss of Interest, Continued Overuse, Deception, Escapism, Jeopardy/Risking.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the normality test, the significance value (p-value) for the Shapiro-Wilk test was 0.158, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was 0.210, and the Anderson-Darling test was 0.119. All significance values were greater than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$). Thus, it can be concluded that the residual data is normally distributed. Furthermore, the visualization results using the QQ Plot show that the residual points tend to follow the diagonal line and do not exhibit extreme deviations. This condition further strengthens the assumption of normality has been met.

Linearity Test

Omnibus ANOVA Test

		Sum Squares	of df	Mean Square	F	p
x	emotional gratification	1189	1	1188.7	50.4	<.001
Residuals		2219	94	23.6		

Note: Type 3 sum of squares

The results of the linearity test showed that the relationship between Emotional Gratification and Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD) was linear and significant ($F = 50.4$; $p < 0.001$). Thus, a simple linear regression analysis can be conducted to test the research hypothesis.

Model Coefficients - y IGD

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Intercept	43,793	6.0345	7.26	<.001
x emotional gratification	0.547	0.0770	7.10	<.001

The equation shows that a constant value of 43.793 indicates an Internet Gaming Disorder score when Emotional Gratification is zero. Meanwhile, the regression coefficient of 0.547 indicates that every one-unit increase in the Emotional Gratification score will increase the Internet Gaming Disorder score by 0.547 units. The significance value for the Emotional Gratification variable is $p < 0.001$, which means Emotional Gratification has a significant influence on Internet Gaming Disorder.

Hypothesis Testing

Model Fit Measures

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²
1	0.591	0.349	0.342

Note. Models estimated using sample size of N=96

The analysis results show that the correlation coefficient (R) value is 0.591, which indicates a positive relationship with moderate to strong strength between

Emotional Gratification and Internet Gaming Disorder. The R^2 value of 0.349 indicates that Emotional Gratification is able to explain 34.9% of the variation in Internet Gaming Disorder. Meanwhile, the remaining 65.1% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study. This regression model was calculated using a sample of 96 respondents. Based on the results of the simple linear regression analysis, it can be concluded that Emotional Gratification has a positive and significant effect on Internet Gaming Disorder in adolescent Roblox users ($\beta = 0.547$; $t = 7.10$; $p < 0.001$). The coefficient of determination value of 34.9% indicates that the higher the level of emotional satisfaction obtained by adolescents through Roblox, the higher their tendency to experience Internet Gaming Disorder.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that emotional gratification has a positive and significant effect on Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD) in adolescent Roblox users. These findings suggest that the greater the emotional gratification adolescents derive from playing Roblox, the greater their likelihood of experiencing IGD symptoms. Roblox serves not only as a medium for entertainment but also provides a variety of psychological experiences that can fulfill players' emotional needs through social interaction, in-game achievements, freedom of expression, and enjoyable gaming experiences.

In this study, Emotional Gratification encompasses four main aspects: enjoyment, achievement, social interaction, and escapism. These four aspects provide positive emotional experiences that encourage players to continue engaging with the game. When adolescents experience pleasure, rewards, social connections, or escape from the stresses of everyday life through Roblox, they tend to repeat the activity to maintain these positive feelings. This can increase attachment to the game and ultimately trigger excessive gaming behavior.

The findings of this study align with Uses and Gratifications Theory, which explains that individuals actively use media to fulfill their psychological and social needs (Blumler & Katz, 1974). In the context of online gaming, Roblox can fulfill the needs for enjoyment, competence, social connection, and emotional regulation, thus encouraging players to continue using the platform. Research by Männikkö et al. (2020) also showed that gaming motivations oriented toward enjoyment and escapism are associated with an increased risk of gaming disorder. Similar findings were reported by Ballou and Zendle (2022), who found that high emotional gratification can increase players' engagement with digital games.

The results of this study also showed that Emotional Gratification explained 34.9% of the variation in Internet Gaming Disorder. This suggests that emotional gratification is a significant contributing factor to the emergence of IGD tendencies in adolescent Roblox users. However, 65.1% of the variation in IGD was influenced by factors outside this study, such as self-control, impulsivity, loneliness, psychological stress, anxiety, social support, parenting patterns, and the characteristics of the games used. These findings reinforce the view that IGD is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by various psychological and social factors (Stevens et al., 2021).

Practically, the results of this study indicate that excessive gaming behavior is not always caused by the desire to play alone, but can also be an attempt by adolescents to fulfill emotional needs that are not met in everyday life. Therefore, parents, teachers, and counselors need to help adolescents find more adaptive sources of emotional satisfaction through positive activities, healthy social relationships, and skill development outside the digital world. Furthermore, education on digital literacy and time management is needed to prevent the development of Internet Gaming Disorder.

CONCLUSION

The analysis results show that Emotional Gratification has a positive and significant influence on Internet Gaming Disorder ($\beta = 0.547$; $p < 0.001$). This finding indicates that the higher the level of emotional satisfaction obtained by adolescents through playing Roblox, the higher their tendency to experience Internet Gaming Disorder. The correlation coefficient value of $R = 0.591$ indicates a positive relationship with moderate to strong strength between Emotional Gratification and Internet Gaming Disorder. In addition, the coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.349 indicates that Emotional Gratification is able to explain 34.9% of the variation in Internet Gaming Disorder, while the remaining 65.1% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study.

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