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# FACTORS INFLUENCING DIGITAL GAME ADDICTION IN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: SCHOOL BURNOUT, FEAR OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION, AND TOLERANCE PERSPECTIVES

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#### **Abstract**

Today, the widespread use of smartphones and mobile internet has provided various advantages, such as using technology in teaching processes inside and outside the classroom and transitioning to hybrid education applications. However, increasing and facilitating access to these technologies lead to increased digital game addiction. This study examined the relationships between students' digital game addiction in individual and school psycho-social environments. In this direction, the relationships between digital game addiction, school burnout, fear of negative evaluation, and tendency to tolerance were explored. The research was conducted on 403 high school students. The relationship between structures was examined. Research findings reveal that digital game addiction positive and significantly correlates with school burnout and fear of negative evaluation. On the other hand, a significant inverse relationship was found between digital game addiction and a tendency to tolerance. In addition, fear of negative evaluation positive and significantly correlates with school burnout however, tendency to tolerance no significant relationship between school burnout and fear of negative evaluation. Based on the research results, what can be done to reduce the digital game addiction of high school students was discussed, and various suggestions were made for researchers, teachers, and school guidance services.

**Keywords**: Digital game addiction; adolescence; school burnout; fear of negative evaluation; tendency to tolerance

#### 1. Introduction

The internet, mobile devices, and social media use are increasing rapidly. According to Statista (2021) report data, it is seen that more than half of the world's population is active internet user. Furthermore, as per the report, it has come to light that over 50% of the global population currently engages with mobile internet and social media platforms. The report also anticipates a growth in the number of smartphone users, internet usage, and social media participation in the forthcoming years.

The swift proliferation of emerging technologies has sparked extensive theoretical debates and empirical investigations regarding their potential advantages. For example, when it is considered educational environments, it is known that the use of mobile devices and the internet facilitates students' access to information without the time and place restrictions, and the continuation of education is ensured with distance education applications during the pandemic period (Al-Rahmi et al., 2022; Avci et al., 2023; Burke et al., 2022). Today, within the scope of hybrid education applications, it is seen that mobile devices and the internet are actively used in both in-class and out-of-class teaching processes (Alturki & Aldraiweesh, 2022; Karaoglan Yilmaz et al., 2023; Karaoglan Yilmaz, Ustun et al., 2023; Lai, Saab, & Admiraal, 2022).

Notwithstanding the manifold benefits, the prevalence of deficient self-regulation in the utilization of diverse new technologies is widespread, and the immoderate consumption of digital technologies has been acknowledged as a public health concern (World Health Organization (WHO), 2015). One of these behavioral addiction areas is digital game addiction. According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA), it explains that this addiction consists of both online and offline games (APA, 2013). WHO has officially included "Gaming disorder" in the 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) (WHO, 2018).

Presently, students' active integration of mobile devices and internet connectivity in both the classroom and extracurricular pursuits has facilitated their accessibility to digital games (Chen & Tsai, 2021; Karaoglan Yilmaz, & Yilmaz, 2023; Karaoglan Yilmaz, Yilmaz, & Erdogdu, 2023; Krouska et al., 2022). Therefore, students can play digital games even during the lesson. This situation may lead to individual problems, such as reducing the student's interest and motivation in the lesson, and problems that disrupt the classroom order, such as confusion and restlessness at the class level. The risk of digital game addiction is increasing among today's youth and is a problem area that needs to be solved urgently in educational environments (Rahayu et al., 2021; Wang, Abdelhamid, & Sanders, 2021; Yilmaz et al., 2023; Yilmaz, Sulak et al., 2023). When the literature is examined, it is seen that various studies have been conducted to determine the causes of digital game addiction (Li et al., 2021; Salvarli & Griffiths, 2021; Sariyska et al., 2017). Within these investigations, the connection between diverse individual variances and addiction to games is explored. However, according to the researchers, many more dimensions need to be examined in individual and socio-environmental terms. One of them is the relationship between school burnout, fear of negative evaluation, and tendency to tolerate with digital game addiction. These variables can negatively affect students' perceptions and attitudes toward school in terms of school environments. Therefore, it is thought that these variables may also be related to digital game addiction. When the literature is examined, it is seen that the relationship between these variables and digital game addiction has not been investigated yet. This study explores the role of school burnout, fear of negative evaluation, and tendency to tolerate on digital game addictions in adolescents. It is hoped that the research findings will guide teachers and school guidance service experts in behavioral interventions to reduce digital game addiction in students.

#### 2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

#### 2.1. School burnout and digital game addiction

The concept of burnout was first put forward in business life, and then it started to be used in educational environments. Burnout is characterized as the emotional, cognitive, and physical exhaustion experienced by an individual as a result of the unbridled expenditure of their energy, capabilities, and other resources, as if they were attempting to deplete them without restraint (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Conversely, school burnout pertains to the overwhelming pressures associated with academic life

and the educational environment as a whole, leading to emotional, cognitive, and physical depletion or exhaustion among students (Aypay & Eryilmaz, 2011). School burnout is defined as burnout due to school demands, a negative attitude towards school, decreased commitment to school and experiencing a sense of personal inadequacy as a student (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004).

Schaufeli et al. (2002) state that academic stress is an important cause of school burnout. Zhang, Gan, and Cham (2007) stated that student's constantly feeling of tiredness, show indifference to school assignments, take a careless attitude towards school, become insensitive to people around them, perceive themselves as inadequate, doubt their abilities, and parallel, decrease in academic achievement is an important symptom of school burnout.

It is thought that school burnout may be one of the factors that lead to digital game addiction. Because students with high school burnout will be able to deal with other activities that will attract their attention instead of dealing with academic affairs. Considering that almost every student has access to smartphones and mobile internet today, students are likely to turn to digital games. Therefore, the increase in school burnout is thought to be one of the factors that may lead to an increase in students' digital game addiction. No research has been found yet examining the relationship between school burnout and digital game addiction when the literature is reviewed. In light of this perspective, the initial hypothesis of this research can be stated as below.

H<sub>1</sub>: School burnout significantly correlates digital game addiction.

#### 2.2. Fear of negative evaluation, school burnout, and digital game addiction

Cognitive-behavioral approaches have revealed the fear of negative evaluation as the core of social phobia (Weeks, Heimberg, & Rodebaugh, 2008). According to Rapee and Heimberg (1997), individuals with social phobia believe that others perform much better than themselves in social performance situations, such as public speaking. This belief causes social phobic individual who doubts their abilities and performance to think that they will not be successful, and that other people will evaluate them negatively or reject them (Cetin et al., 2010; Leary, 1983). As a natural consequence of these and similar thoughts, the individual with social phobia tries to avoid social environments and situations requiring social performance or seek safety-providing behaviors not to be exposed to such negative evaluations or rejection (Cetin et al., 2010).

Students with a fear of negative evaluation have difficulty expressing themselves in front of the public (Geukens et al., 2022). Therefore, these students may experience situations such as not participating in classroom discussions, not being able to interact with the teacher and other students, and not performing collaborative learning activities (Trompeter et al., 2018; Ugur, Kaya, & Tanhan, 2021). As a result of the fear of negative evaluation, the student may experience school burnout over time, and digital game addiction may occur in these students. No research has been found yet examining the relationship between these structures when the literature is reviewed. With this viewpoint in mind, the second and third hypotheses of this research can be stated as below.

H<sub>3</sub>: Fear of negative evaluation significantly correlates digital game addiction.

H<sub>3</sub>: Fear of negative evaluation significantly correlates school burnout.

## 2.3. Tendency to tolerance, school burnout, fear of negative evaluation and digital game addiction

Tolerance is one of the basic values individuals should have in our modern world. Tolerance is seen as a value that provides individual rights and freedoms based on respect for others (Caliskan & Saglam,

2012). Tolerance is an operative form of communication rooted in mutual affection, regard, confidence, and comprehension, which enables coexistence within society despite all disparities (Gozubuyuk, 2002). Upon scrutinizing the definition, it becomes evident that it accentuates the significance of love, mutual respect, and empathy as core values. Humans are social beings who live together and have some needs required to live together. One of the main values that ensure that needs are met in a healthy, peaceful, and peaceful manner is the value of tolerance. As Agius and Ambrosewicz (2003) stated, teaching the values and skills of "learning to live together" becomes a priority issue for education. It is known that schools have critical importance in adopting this value (Caliskan & Saglam, 2012).

It is stated that the high tolerance tendencies of students will increase teacher-student and student-student interaction and make it more qualified, and it can enable students to participate in information-sharing and collaborative learning activities (Curran, 2016; Gregory & Cornell, 2009). On the contrary, it will be difficult to talk about quality communication and interaction in a classroom with students who cannot tolerate others. This situation may lead to school burnout in time. In this case, the student will prefer to be alone rather than interacting with other students. Students may lead to behavioral addictions such as digital game addiction. When the literature is analyzed, these are problems that need to be investigated. Building upon the aforementioned premises, the fourth, fifth and sixth hypotheses of this research can be articulated as below.

H<sub>4</sub>: Tendency to tolerance significantly correlates digital game addiction.

H<sub>5</sub>: Tendency to tolerance significantly correlates school burnout.

H<sub>6</sub>: Tendency to tolerance significantly correlates fear of negative evaluation.

#### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Participants and procedure

The research was conducted using a correlational study approach. Correlational methods are employed to investigate the influence of various variables on the dependent variable under scrutiny (Creswell, 2003). The variables of this study are digital game addiction, school burnout, fear of negative evaluation, and tendency to tolerance. The online survey was answered by 403 high school students.

#### 3.2. Measures

Self-report scales were used to obtain the data of the study. These scales are as follows.

*Digital game addiction scale*: The digital game addiction scale was developed by Şahin, Keskin, and Yurdugül (2019). The scale consists of six items. The scale form is in a 5-point likert type. The Cronbach alpha value calculated for the scale is 0.78.

*School burnout scale*: School burnout scale was developed by Salmela-Aro et al. (2009). Secer et al. (2013) adapted it into Turkish. The scale consists of nine items. The scale form is in a 5-point likert type. The Cronbach alpha value calculated for the scale is 0.80.

*Fear of negative evaluation scale*: Fear of negative evaluation scale was developed by Hart et al. (2008). Cetin, Dogan, and Sapmaz (2010) adapted the scale to Turkish. The scale consists of 11 items. The scale used in the study was a 5-point Likert scale. The Cronbach alpha value calculated for the scale is 0.82.

Tendency to tolerance scale: The Tendency to Tolerance Scale was developed by Caliskan and Saglam (2012). The scale consists of 18 items. The scale form is in a 5-point likert type. The Cronbach alpha value calculated for the scale is 0.84.

#### 4. Results

## 4.1. Students' responses to digital game addiction, school burnout, fear of negative evaluation, and tendency to tolerance scales

The descriptive statistical scores of the students' responses to digital game addiction, school burnout, fear of negative evaluation, and tendency to tolerance scales are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Scales	Number of items	The lowest score	The highest score	$\overline{X}$	sd	Skewness	Kurtosis	<i>X</i> /k
Digital game addiction	6	6.00	30.00	10.01	5.52	1.352	1.290	1.67
School burnout	9	9.00	72.00	29.09	13.74	1.032	1.118	3.23
Fear of negative evaluation	11	19.00	47.00	30.56	5.95	110	195	2.78
Tendency to tolerance	18	18.00	90.00	70.76	14.52	742	.463	3.93

As indicated in Table 1, the mean score of students on the digital game addiction scale is 10.01 (1.67 out of 5), and the average score on school burnout scale is 29.09 (3.23 out of 5), average score for fear of negative evaluation scale is 30.56 (2.78 out of 5), and the average score of tendency to tolerance scale is 70.76 (3.93 out of 5). Based on these findings, it was established that students exhibited low scores on the digital game addiction scale, moderate scores on the school burnout and fear of negative evaluation scales, and high scores on the tolerance tendency scale.

## 4.2. Relations between students' digital game addiction, school burnout, fear of negative evaluation, and tendency to tolerance scales

The Pearson correlation has investigated relationships between digital game addiction, school burnout, fear of negative evaluation, and tendency to tolerance scales.

Table 2. Correlations between variables

		Digital game addiction	School burnout	Fear of negative evaluation	Tendency to tolerance
Digital game addiction	r	-			
School burnout	r	.180**			
Fear of negative evaluation	r	.226**	.477**		
Tendency to tolerance	r	347**	.038	090	-
		Correlation is significant		` ′	

As seen in Table 2, there is a moderate relationship among school burnout – and fear of negative evaluation (r=.477, p<.01). Besides, there is a moderate and negative relationship between digital game addiction - tendency to tolerance (r=-.347, p<.01). In addition, there is a small and positive relationship between digital game addiction - school burnout (r=.180, p<.01) and digital game addiction - fear of negative evaluation (r=.226, p<.01). Behind that, there is no significant relationship between tendency to tolerance - school burnout (r=.038, p>.01) and tendency to tolerance - fear of negative evaluation (r=-.090, p>.01).

#### 5. Discussions and Conclucions

This study discovered the relationships between digital game addiction, school burnout, fear of negative evaluation, and tendency to tolerance for the sample consisting of high school students. The correlations of school burnout and students' digital game addiction was examined. Analysis results reveal a significant relationship between students' school burnout and digital game addictions. For students with a high school burnout level, the risk of digital game addiction may be increased. Because for these students, digital game addiction can be seen as a cognitive escape route. Although there is no research investigative the association among school burnout and digital game addiction in the literature, it is seen that similar results are obtained in terms of other addiction types. Tomaszek and Muchacka-Cymerman (2019) revealed in their research that there is a positive and significant relationship between school burnout and problematic internet use. In Choi's study conducted in 2021, a positive and statistically significant association was identified between academic burnout and smartphone addiction. Salmela-Aro et al. (2017) determined that students' excessive internet use significantly predicts school burnout. In the study of Bilgiz and Peker (2021), it was revealed that problematic smartphone and problematic social media use increase school burnout. These results in the literature seem to be consistent with the results of our study. From this point of view, it can be said that reducing students' school burnout levels may be beneficial to facilitating students' digital game addictions.

The correlations of fear of negative evaluation and digital game addiction. The analysis results reveal a significant relationship between students' fear of negative evaluation and digital game addictions. Students with a high fear of negative evaluation may tend to play digital games instead of communicating

and interacting with the teacher and other students in the classroom and participating in collaborative learning activities. Because students are in the virtual environment, and the control of the environment is in their hands. Therefore, they can experience the feeling of fear of negative evaluation less in the digital game. Although there is no study in the literature examining the relationship between fear of negative evaluation and digital game addiction, it is seen that similar results are obtained in terms of other types of addiction and social phobia. In the study by Sioni, Burleson, and Bekerian (2017), it was revealed that increased social phobia levels of individuals lead to an increase in Internet gaming disorder symptoms. Yayan et al. (2017) showed in their research that there is a significant positive relationship between Internet addiction and social phobia. These results in the literature seem to be consistent with the results of our study. From this point of view, it can be said that reducing the fear of negative evaluation levels of students may be beneficial in reducing students' digital game addictions.

The correlations of fear of negative evaluation and school burnout was examined. The analysis results reveal a significant relationship between students' fear of negative evaluation and school burnout. Therefore, to reduce students' school burnout levels, it may be appropriate to facilitate students' fear of negative evaluation and take measures for this. Kocak and Secer (2018) revealed in their research that emotional exhaustion and anxiety are associated with school burnout. It can be said that emotional exhaustion and anxiety are psychological structures related to fear of negative evaluation. In this context, it can be stated that the research results are similar to the results of our research.

The correlations of tendency to tolerance and digital game addiction was examined. The analysis results reveal a significant inverse relationship between students' tendency to tolerance and digital game addictions. It is expected and desired that students have a high tolerance towards each other. Thus, the student will be more open to in-class communication and cooperation. Students in a positive classroom atmosphere resulting from tolerance will be able to show interest and participation in the lesson instead of extracurricular activities such as digital games. This may lead to a decrease in students' digital game addictions.

The correlations of tendency to tolerance and school burnout was examined. The analysis results reveal no significant relationship between students' tendency to tolerance and school burnout. However, high tolerance tendencies of other students towards students who exhibit undesirable behaviors in the classroom may mean the continuation of undesirable behaviors. The correlations of tendency to tolerance and fear of negative evaluation was examined. The analysis results reveal no significant relationship between students' tendency to tolerance and fear of negative evaluation. Showing undesirable behaviors in the classroom may cause deterioration of the classroom order and positive climate. It is thought that this situation may cause the formation of school burnout in students. The study by Molinari and Grazia (2021) revealed that students' perceptions of school climate effectively affect school burnout. Based on the consequences, it was stated that while a positive atmosphere reduced school burnout, a negative atmosphere increased school burnout.

Some inferences can be made for teachers, school administrators, and school guidance service experts based on the research findings. First, it is important to create a demographic and positive classroom climate to reduce students' digital game addiction (Chang & Kim, 2020; Zhu et al., 2015). Students should not hesitate to share their ideas, even if they are wrong. Teachers should try to get all students to participate in classroom discussions. Thus, the student's interest will be directed to the lesson, their motivation will increase, and undesirable extracurricular behaviors will be reduced (Lizzio, Dempster, & Neumann, 2011). In this context, teachers need to minimize the fear of negative evaluation in students. It may be beneficial for school guidance services to support students who have problems in this regard. The gamification method used in education can be a helpful strategy at this point. With the gamification method, students can learn the course topics in fun, and students' interest, motivation, and participation

can be increased (da Rocha Seixas, Gomes, & de Melo Filho, 2016; Saleem, Noori, & Ozdamli, 2021). Thus, it can be ensured that students' interest and participation in the lesson can be increased, and their digital game playing behaviors can be reduced. Creating a demographic and positive classroom climate is also important for reducing school burnout. However, the establishment of school and classroom rules and the students' compliance with these rules should not be ignored. Failure to comply with the classroom rules and the tolerance of other students may cause the students to develop a sense of school burnout over time (Kalkan & Dagli, 2021; Molinari & Grazia, 2021). For this reason, measures can be taken to restrict students' use of smartphones outside of course purposes.

It's important to acknowledge that this study, designed to investigate the connections among digital game addiction, school burnout, fear of negative evaluation, and tolerance tendency, is subject to certain limitations. First of all, the research results are valid for the participants consisting of high school students. Future studies can enhance the validity of the research outcomes by replicating the study with distinct participant groups, such as secondary school students and university students. In some schools, students are even prohibited from bringing smartphones to school. In some schools, the use of smartphones in the classroom for educational purposes is allowed. The results can be compared by repeating the research on students in schools with these two different approaches. Thus, the psycho-social effects of demographic understanding or prohibitions can be compared.

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