



**12th ASIAN Conference on Environment-Behaviour Studies,
Holiday Villa Beach Resort & Spa, Langkawi Island, Malaysia, 01-03 Mar 2024**

Islamic Psychospiritual as Holistic Therapy for Online Gaming Addiction: Expert perspective

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Abstract

Online game addiction has been categorized by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a mental health problem. This article identified an Islamic psychospiritual approach as an alternative to holistic therapy to solve this problem. The study uses qualitative methods through interviews with seven experts consisting of psychiatrists, counselors, and lecturers from several universities in Malaysia. Thematic analysis is used to identify the symptoms, effects, and factors of addiction as well as Islamic psychospiritual solutions. The findings show various effects and contributing factors to the problems and identified solutions by experts using the Islamic psychospiritual approach to reduce the problem.

Keywords: Behavioral Addiction; Online Gaming Addiction; Islamic Psychospiritual; Holistic Therapy

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21834/e-bpj.v9i28.5792>

1.0 Introduction

Online games are connected through internet access, played through various electronic mediums, and are multiplayer (Firda Devi Candranita et al., 2020; Yusnizal Firdaus et al., 2018). It can also be accessed directly online as provided by the game developer. Because game patterns change with time and current trends, online games are now more in focus, and many are users' choice regardless of age and gender differences. At the beginning of its appearance, it is played to fill free time and release a tiring day at work. However, now it has become an addiction when it is played so often that it has interfered with the routine of daily life. Online gaming addiction, according to Xu et al. (2012), refers to a gaming disorder related to the problematic, repetitive, and compulsive use of online gaming platforms that contributes to severe disability over a prolonged period. This symptom harms the player, and if not dealt with, it will cause harm to the players from a social aspect. Today's online game addiction involving screens and gadgets has opened up the boundless space and human mind. According to Shahirah Rafee and Nurhikmah Mubarak Ali (2022), a world without borders can be seen as a phenomenon capable of changing all forms of thought, lifestyle and human behaviour. Previous studies have shown that online game addiction can have psychological and psychosocial implications for players. Among the adverse effects of online games are players experiencing psychological problems such as depression, anxiety or experiencing physical problems such as changes in rest and sleep patterns and suicide attempts (Bonnaire & Baptista, 2019; King & Delfabbro, 2018). It must be feared because these

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21834/e-bpj.v9i28.5792>

changes, actions, and problems can be a starting point and a challenge to society, especially in culture and moral formation. Although this issue has been studied a lot, specific treatment is still lacking and requires a broader study (Wang et al., 2019). Therefore, this article discusses holistic therapy guided by Islamic psycho spirituality according to the perspective of experts in dealing with the problem of online game addiction. Overall, the discussion will focus on symptoms, effects, addiction factors, and solutions through the Islamic psychospiritual approach.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Behavioral addiction

The study of behavioral addiction is a hotly debated topic these days. Behavioral addiction, according to Walther et al. (2012), is a concept of non-substance-related addiction or 'behavior' that describes the same syndrome as substance addiction but with a focus on specific behaviors similar to substance use addiction. It produces short-term gratification and may be persistent and dangerous due to reduced control over behavior. Behavioral addiction is also described as a deterioration of individual function and incompatibility caused by abnormal behavior of specific behaviors (Tas, 2017). According to Ivanov (2013) in Berdibayeva et al. (2021), significant socio-psychological determinants in the formation of addictive behavior among adolescents include character emphasis, low self-confidence, and a disharmonious family education style. Therefore, if left untreated, it will cause harm to the perpetrator physically and psychologically and is capable of changing a person's lifestyle.

2.2 Online Gaming Addiction

Online game addiction, according to Wan Mohd Yusoff Wan Yacob et al. (2021), is classified as one of the psychosocial aspects of playing computer and digital games that is most often debated nowadays. Addiction to online games is a behavioral addiction, and it has been classified by the World Health Organization (2020) as a tendency toward mental illness. It is seen as a lack of self-control when a person spends so much time looking at devices and playing online games for an extended period that they ignore the daily routine. Ericson Ginsos and Salleh Amat (2022), who stated that addiction to online games can result in a variety of changes and effects on the physical and mental health of a player. Spiritual neglect, such as prayer, also occurs in the string of addictions of this online game. According to Muhammad Haziq Ikmal Huzairi and Mohd Syukri Zainal Abidin (2023), the neglect of prayer among students is caused by being too obsessed with online games. As a result, it affects daily activities and can harm social, spiritual, and psychological aspects due to the priority given to online games without any control over them.

2.3 Islamic psychospiritual

Islamic psychospiritual is two words combined from the words psychological and spiritual that carry the meaning of thinking or the study of mental processes and spiritual thinking from the perspective of Islam (Che Zarrina Sa'ari et al., 2021; Mohd Rushdan Mohd Jailani & Ahmad Bukhari Osman, 2015). According to Siti Nur Aafifah Hashim and Wan Norhaniza Wan Hasan (2022), this psychospiritual is an alternative to treating the soul, which is divided into spiritual (lust, spirit, heart), mental (intellect), feelings and behavior (morality) based on Islamic practices guided by the Quran, hadith and practices practiced by the pious and knowledge that does not conflict with Sharia. It shows that Islamic psychospiritual methods highlight the method of purifying the soul (tazkiyyah al-nafs), which is necessary for humans to achieve happiness in life in this world and the hereafter. Abu Talib al-Makki (1997) in Khairul Hamimah Mohamad Jodi et al. (2014) presented Islamic psychotherapy methods by integrating Islamic psychospiritual methods. This concept highlights the Sufism approach, which functions as prevention, healing, care, and purification of the heart. So, the Islamic psychospiritual approach is seen to be able to control players who have difficulty controlling online game addiction. This therapy is seen as appropriate and in line with what Rafeah Saidon et al. (2021) said, where psychospiritual therapy (PST) has been recognized for its ability to deal with various types of mental illness suffered by patients.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Study population and sample

This study uses qualitative research through purposeful interviews. The study was conducted with study participants who included a group of experts consisting of seven people, including psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors, and lecturers at a public university in Malaysia. The involvement of experts selected as interview informants aims to obtain their confirmation through an interview protocol built based on the research study's objectives to obtain the data's accuracy. In this study, the researcher used a purposive sampling technique. According to Ahmad Sunawari Long (2018), the purposive sample selection technique can be done according to the objectives and goals of the researcher to meet the needs of the research purpose. The sample selection is based on the characteristics of the sample according to what the researcher needs. It aims to meet the needs and purposes of research. This study also used a sampling technique called 'snowball' sampling. It can be used to identify the importance of cases from individuals who know and those who have a variety of information about a case and study (Creswell, 2007). It is a technique where the participants involved in the research are asked to assist the researcher in identifying potential candidate candidates who have expertise and experience in assisting the research.

3.2 Data collection methods

This study includes a qualitative theoretical study on the 'grounded theory' method. In data collection for grounded theory research, according to Creswell (2007), researchers need to select individual samples to be studied based on their contribution to theory development. Therefore, this study uses face-to-face and semi-structured interview methods to question informants. The data collected in this study is divided into two parts: secondary and primary.

3.3 Data analysis methods

This theoretical study will be analyzed using thematic analysis. The data analysis is done to obtain themes for each question answered by the study participants (Creswell, 2012). So, in this study, research data analysis is carried out according to the type of data, namely primary and secondary data. For the primary data, the researcher will analyze the primary data from the interview transcripts using the thematic analysis method through the Atlas—ti 8 software. When the interview was conducted, many answers were given by the informant and analyzed by the researcher according to the chosen theme.

4.0 Findings

4.1 Formation of themes and subthemes

Table 1 shows the four themes and subthemes that have been formed.

Themes	Subthemes
Individual symptoms of online gaming addiction	1. Inability to socialize 2. Inability to control emotions 3. Inability to control time 4. Lack of self-control
Addictive effects of online games	1. Cheating 2. Spiritual neglect 3. Neglect of responsibilities and daily routines 4. Dietary pattern changes
Factors involved with online gaming addiction	1. Less control from parents 2. Lack of self-control 3. Peer influence 4. Influence of social media 5. Environmental influence 6. Lack of religious understanding 7. Gadgets and Internet access 8. Visuals and graphics
Islamic psychospiritual therapy for dealing with online gaming addiction	1. Preservation of basic worship - Prayer - Read the al-Quran - Remembrance (Zikr) - Pray (Du'a) - Fasting 2. The concept of Ihsan 3. The concept of Itqan 4. The concept of Islamic Sport

4.2 Themes and subthemes

First theme: Symptoms of online game addiction

Subtheme 1: Inability to socialize

"The person addicted to this online game is more himself with the screen, right? So, he tends not to speak because he is facing the screen. So the effect of this will be that, in the long term, he will have less social communication. He is not good at talking to people because he faces the screen too much.." (R2)

Subtheme 2: Inability to control emotions

"One always thinks about online games. A person will feel sad when he cannot play, and he cannot play intermittently. He has to spend much time on online games.." (R1)

"Means he was addicted. He uses the online game as a place where he vents his feelings.." (R1)

"A person will feel sad, restless, and uncontrollably bored when he cannot play as if something is wrong. It means that playing is mandatory in the context of this online game.." (R1)

"Maybe he will have an emotional breakdown. Emotional disturbances from the point of feeling anxious, restless, anxiety and so on when he does not get what he wants or is addicted to (online games).." (R3)(R5)

"They want to escape the mind or from thinking about this problem, and they focus on video games.." (R3)(R6)

"If he leaves (gadgets or online games), he will feel an emotional mess. This emotional disorder means that he cannot show himself as a normal person with positive emotions, but he is easily bouncy. When he is tired, he will be easily angry and tempered.." (R7)

Subtheme 3: Inability to control time

"If before a person was fond of socializing, recreation and so on, he has lost interest in those things as the effect of online game addiction.." (R1)

"Open the game phone. That's among them, so that if the bad ones are so bad that it's a waste of time.." (R4)

"Among the common symptoms found in those addicted to online games is that it is difficult to manage time, there is no balance in his daily life.." (R5)

Subtheme 4: Inability of Self-control

"Even if a person has awareness, but that awareness is not able to help him reduce the rate for him to play and so on.." (R1)

"So we can see that symptom when a person is less able to control himself. Lack of control. Maybe it can be seen that there is less control over one thing. He is less able to control himself than engage in one of these online games.." (R2)

Second theme: Addictive effects of online games

Subtheme 1: Cheating

"He would cheat others for the amount of time spent playing. When asked about the hours allocated to gaming, he would lie about the number of hours even though it exceeded the time spent on online games.." (R1)

Subtheme 2: Spiritual neglect

"High possibility of skipping the prayer is highest.." (R1)

"There will be an awareness that online games are not good and can lead to the existence of abominable traits such as abandoning prayer, not trusting in doing work, and so on.." (R1)

Subtheme 3: Neglect of responsibilities and daily routine

"Or he is a student, then he will have problems at school or in the office if an employee; they will be more inclined to play rather than focus on mandatory tasks.." (R1)

"Can ignore other routine activities so that it is possible if these children are willing to skip school because he wants to play.." (R2)

"Online games are his priority. His eyes need to be looked at first instead of routine so that he can set aside his other activities.." (R2)

"Cannot focus on career, on the tasks given, that is what we call addiction.." (R4)

"He sits in the room, or he plays video games until he does not do anything else; he just has to focus without looking back.." (R6)

"Sometimes it is fun to play until you forget that there are many other responsibilities to the point of addiction.." (R6)

"Because of this, he forgot his basic work.." (R7)

Subtheme 4: Dietary pattern changes

"High possibility of skipping the food and drink is highest.." (R1)

"There is a dietary pattern change.." (R5)

"For example, if it is a child, taking food carelessly like snacks and so on to go back to playing online games. So, it will affect health..." (R5)

Third theme: Factors involved in online game addiction

Subtheme 1: Less control from parents

"In my view, it is a lack of control from parents. As adults, parents need to set deadlines. Datuk Professor Dr. Muhaya Mohamad said the best and sufficient time for children to play is fifteen minutes only. That is how to control the problem of addiction. That is if it is a child.." (R1)

"When mom and dad buy a gadget, there is more internet, so then there is no monitor, there is no screen time, it will cause the child to be more aggressive.." (R2)

"Due to the lack of supervision from their parents or guardians for individuals who are addicted to the game.." (R5)

"We do not want to blame the parents, but we want to say that often, these people will start from neglect at home.." (R7)

Subtheme 2: Lack of self-control

"The reason that does that is every individual. So, if he cannot control himself, that will cause him to become addicted to this online game.." (R2)

"The factor is itself. If he can control himself, control himself, and discipline himself, then this will not happen. Moreover, he can divide the time. When playing games, you can play games. Then, he disciplined himself.." (R4)

Subtheme 3: Peer influence

"The influence of peers is powerful in teenagers. So is the influence of social media and the influence of the environment. Why do I say that the influence of peers is powerful? At the teenage stage, they are looking for identity and friends. They see what their friends are doing and follow along to find common ground and be in line with their friends.." (R1)

"Influenced by his friends because of online games, he can interact with his friends, play together, talk. So when that friend invites you to play ha, so he lingers.." (R2)

"Those are the friends factors, right ? Or we feel left behind if we do not play games like this.." (R4)(R5)

"The tendency of the individual when he sees his friend immersed in the game. So he, too, looks happy.." (R7)

Subtheme 4: The influence of social media

"In the past, the internet could only be viewed on a desktop computer and was difficult to carry anywhere. After the change of time, people focus on smaller gadgets like the iPhone. It becomes a gadget in our pocket, our hand at all times. When it is in hand, we can see every day, time, moment, and moment because it is in hand. So he causes addiction because we do not control that time.." (R1)

Subtheme 5: Environmental influence

"After that, the influence of the environment. For example, how many people are talking if we are on public transport? When the environment is like that, we will be very vulnerable to falling into online game addiction.." (R1)

Subtheme 6: Lack of religious understanding

"The next factor is a lack of religious understanding. Muslims can play anything, but there should be limits. People who lack an understanding of religion do not consider which content is good or useful, what period, etc. That is not taken into account. While in Islam, I can play and have fun, but everything has a limit. So, if we do not stick to that, he will cause us to be complacent and negligent.." (R1)

Subtheme 7: Gadget and Internet access

"Related to internet access to online games, right? Internet access and also that tool; mobile phones now, smartphones. Smartphones are cheap now. So, gadgets or mobile phones can be easily obtained, and there is also a lot of free Wi-Fi access.." (R4)

"Another factor may also be involved due to current Technology. Technology now has 5G, 4G, and so on. He will say that he will encourage that person to get involved with online games.." (R5)

Subtheme 8: Visuals and graphics

"An example from the point of view of the online game is from the visuals; the graphics are interesting. It will be interesting.." (R5)

The fourth theme: Islamic psychospiritual therapy to deal with the problem of online game addiction

Subtheme 1: Preservation of bare worship

Prayer

"They need to be busy with beneficial activities such as prayer in the context of worship. .When we are persistent in praying, it will come in us to leave the bad things.." (R1)(R2)

"Worship therapy is also one of the methods during therapy in the recovery process. Give him the practices, meaning at least the mandatory ones must be completed first. If it is not complete, then it is difficult.." (R4)

Read the al-Quran

"We as psychiatrists, psychologists do not prevent the verses of ruqyah. This helps. For me, I encourage them to take it because I know that taking it will make mental health treatment easier.." (R3)

Remembrance (Zikr)

"Apart from other spiritual treatments such as zikr and so on.." (R1)(R7)

"If additional deeds, dhikr, istighfar, all that one time, can also be given. What is the purpose? The purpose is for him always to remember God.." (R4)

Pray (Du'a)

"With pray (dua) too, can be used to treat.." (R6)(R7)

Fasting

"Fasting and various other acts of worship. It should be a milestone in the recovery of the soul of the person who is addicted to this online game so that he realizes that he functions in society, as a child, as a devout Muslim.." (R6)(R7)

Subtheme 2: The concept of Ihsan

"The concept of Ihsan feels that God is watching. If we do not feel that, we have to feel that we see God, right? So the concept of Ihsan needs to be repeated in the context we developed earlier.." (R2)(R7)

"I believe the current treatment elements can be used to treat online games like repentance, self-reflection, effort, and reliance. Believe that there is a power greater than our small self that can help us. That is a concept in Islam. God can help us no matter how bad and sinful we are; God can forgive..." (R3)(R5)

Subtheme 3: The concept of Itqan

"If you want to break that thing (addiction to online games), you have to be able to; you need to have discipline and determination. Follow the concept of itqan to fight the will of his lust until he can because that lust has controlled him.." (R2)(R5)

Subtheme 4: The concept of Islamic Sport

"In the Prophet's Islam, we are encouraged to do archery, swimming, and horseback riding, which are sunnah sports that are also recommended. So, this sport is also one of the things that can be done for a person to have physical activity; indirectly, his time is filled with something useful. However, I think that sport is an activity under the psychospirituality of Islam. It is just that the element is more about the physical aspect.." (R2)

5.0 Discussion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that online game addiction is detected when a person has symptoms of social inability, emotional control inability, time control inability, and self-control inability. It hurts human psychology and psychosocial. This

negative effect is similar to the findings of Bonnaire and Baptista (2019) and Walther et al. (2012).

The findings of the study also show that addiction to online games results in cheating, spiritual neglect, neglecting responsibilities and daily routines, as well as changing dietary patterns. Factors that lead to online game addiction are lack of control from parents, lack of self-control, peer influence, social media influence, environmental influence, lack of understanding of religion, access to gadgets and the internet, and exciting visuals and graphics. Thus making it difficult for players to stop the activity.

In addition, the findings of the study also show that online game addiction is a disorder of the internal (spiritual) control of human beings towards games. Therefore, experts suggest an Islamic psychospiritual approach as an alternative to deal with it. This aligns with the approach proposed by Rafeah Saidon et al. (2021). According to Rafeah Saidon et al. (2021), this Islamic psychospiritual therapy has been recognized for its ability to deal with various types of mental illnesses suffered by patients.

Based on expert opinion, the Islamic psychospiritual approach that can help in dealing with the problem of online game addiction is the preservation of bare worship, the appreciation of the concept of Ihsan, the appreciation of the concept of Itqan and also the appreciation of Islamic sports therapy. Therefore, this study suggests that these four solutions be used as a basis for strengthening individual spirituality. The sports therapy approach aligns with the views of Mohd Arshad Yahya and Mohd Firdaus Abdullah (2020), who say that sports therapy can provide good development in changing negative behavior.

6.0 Conclusion& Recommendations

The issue of online gaming is a challenging issue to address because its use is difficult to control. It can be said that due to the variety of factors in the findings of the study, it has changed the lifestyle of the community and finally plunged them into online game addiction. As a result, various adverse effects appear and can interfere psychologically and psychosocially with human life. Therefore, this psychospiritual approach is proposed to deal with the problem of online game addiction. Hopefully, this approach can be a support system to reduce and deal with the problem of online game addiction. This study is expected to open up opportunities and space for discussion and comprehensive research at the national level to highlight Islamic psychology as a solution initiative to various problems. Further studies are strongly encouraged, such as pilot studies and the construction of control modules to identify and deal with online game addiction through Islamic psychospiritual concepts.

Acknowledgments

This work was partly supported by The Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (MOHE) and Universiti Teknologi MARA Malaysia (UiTM) for their contributions to this study. This research was funded by the grant of Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) Reference Code: FRGS/1/2022/SSI13/UiTM/02/14

Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

This paper contributes to the fields of study of Islamic Psychology and Islamic Psychospiritual.

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