

ONLINE GAMING HABITS, ANXIETY LEVELS AND COPING MECHANISMS OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN IGPIT, DIGOS CITY; BASIS FOR A GUIDANCE PROGRAM

Ermie V. Steeves
Louie Duterte

Graduate School, FEU Roosevelt, Cainta, Rizal, Philippines

Corresponding author's email: eavsteeves@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the online gaming habits, anxiety levels, and coping mechanisms of junior high school students at Igpit National High School, Digos City, as the basis for the development of a guidance program. The study used a mixed-methods design. A total of 120 students were selected through random sampling and assessed using the OGAS and GAD-7. For the qualitative phase, 16 students with high to severe gaming involvement and anxiety were purposively selected for in-depth interviews to explore their coping mechanisms. The findings indicated that a substantial proportion of students exhibited moderate to high levels of online gaming engagement and anxiety. Statistical analysis demonstrated a significant positive correlation between online gaming habits and anxiety levels, indicating that greater gaming involvement is associated with increased anxiety. Qualitative data revealed that students frequently use online gaming as a coping mechanism to address stress, boredom, and academic pressure, reflecting emotion-focused coping strategies. Nevertheless, maladaptive coping behaviors, including avoidance, excessive gaming, and challenges in self-regulation, were also observed. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings suggests that although gaming can offer temporary emotional relief, excessive involvement may lead to increased anxiety and ineffective coping strategies. In response to these results, a localized guidance program is proposed, featuring Digital Dialogue Workshops that emphasize emotional awareness, cognitive restructuring, adaptive coping strategies, and responsible gaming practices. This study underscores the significance of school-based interventions in fostering balanced gaming behavior and supporting students' mental health and well-being.

Keywords: *Online gaming habits, Anxiety levels, Coping mechanisms, Guidance program, Junior high school students*

INTRODUCTION

Online gaming has become an integral part of adolescents' daily lives, particularly among junior high school students who devote a considerable amount of time to playing digital games (Ogdie & Fischer, 2015). Research indicates that many students engage in gaming for more than three hours per day (Gottfried & Sidoti, 2024). In the Philippine context, the gaming population has grown to approximately 29.9 million users, highlighting the increasing relevance of examining gaming behaviors across different regions (Calibjo et al., 2022). In rural areas such as Igpit, Digos City, factors like limited internet connectivity and fewer gaming facilities may shape online gaming habits differently compared to urban environments, where access is more widespread and gaming culture is more competitive (Delfin & Reyes, 2023). These variations emphasize the importance of conducting localized studies to better understand the nature of online gaming habits.

Many adolescents are drawn to online gaming because it is enjoyable, helps them relax, and provides a temporary escape from daily stress (Pew Research Center, 2024). Online games also help students make and maintain social connections.. These benefits are connected to how students experience and manage their emotions.. Some students use gaming as a coping mechanism to deal with stress, school pressure, or negative feelings. However, relying on games to manage anxiety can become a problem if students begin to depend on gaming as their primary coping strategy. While gaming can help in the short term, using it too much may hide or even worsen anxiety over time.

Recent studies show that spending more time on online gaming is linked to higher anxiety among adolescents. Students who play for long periods are more likely to feel restless, have trouble focusing, experience sleep problems, and rely on gaming to feel better. These results suggest that while gaming can help students cope at first, it can become harmful if it starts to affect their daily lives and emotions.

Some online games can help students improve skills like problem-solving and teamwork. However, existing research suggests that too much gaming can lead to problems such as lower grades (Delos Reyes & Ilagan, 2023), sleep issues (Harvard Health Publishing, 2020), and more mental health concerns, especially anxiety (King & Delfabbro, 2024). This highlights the need to better understand how gaming habits and anxiety are connected, especially in specific places like Igpit, Digos City.

Students use different ways to manage their online gaming habits and anxiety. Helpful strategies like managing time, getting help from parents, and support from friends can lower stress from gaming (Garcia & Mendoza, 2024). But these strategies do not always work the same everywhere, especially in rural areas where there may be fewer resources or less supervision. Sometimes, students use less helpful ways, like playing games too much to avoid schoolwork or emotional problems, which can make anxiety worse.

In the Philippines, family and community have a strong impact on how adolescents behave and feel. Parents, friends, and school programs are important for helping students keep healthy online gaming habits and manage their emotions. Guidance counselors are

especially important for spotting students who feel more anxious because of gaming and for giving them the right support.

As online gaming becomes more common and may be linked to anxiety, it is important to fully understand how gaming habits, anxiety, and coping methods interact in junior high school students. This study aims to fill that gap by looking at these factors in Igpit National High School, Digos City, and by helping to create a guidance program that supports students' mental health and well-being.

Background of the Study

Online gaming is a prevalent activity among students in the digital era, especially in local communities such as Igpit, Digos City. With the accessibility of smartphones, prepaid data, and internet cafés, gaming has become part of adolescents' daily routines. Among junior high school students at Igpit National High School, gaming is a normalized social and recreational activity, often done after school and during free time. However, excessive engagement may lead students to prioritize gaming over academic responsibilities, thereby influencing their lifestyle, peer relationships, and emotional well-being.

At Igpit National High School, with an estimated population of around 500 students for the School Year 2024–2025, online gaming has raised concerns among parents and school personnel. Reports indicate issues such as absenteeism, tardiness, declining academic performance, poor time management, and irregular sleep patterns due to prolonged gaming. Some students also exhibit signs of social withdrawal and increased anxiety, suggesting that gaming may serve both as a coping mechanism and a source of emotional distress.

A significant concern in this context is the absence of a licensed guidance counselor within the school. Currently, guidance responsibilities are assigned to designated personnel who may lack formal training in counseling, which restricts the school's capacity to address students' psychosocial needs effectively. This situation highlights the necessity for a structured and localized guidance program that is evidence-based, practical, and accessible, allowing guidance designates to implement it successfully even without formal counseling licensure. Accordingly, this study seeks to examine students' online gaming habits, anxiety levels, and coping mechanisms, and to develop a program that fosters healthier coping strategies, enhances emotional awareness, and promotes a balanced approach to gaming and academic responsibilities, while providing guidance designates with practical tools and strategies for student support.

Online Gaming as a Global and Normalized Behavior

The literature consistently identifies online gaming as a widespread and normalized activity among adolescents worldwide, driven by increased access to smartphones, internet connectivity, and digital platforms (Statista, 2024; Pew Research Center, 2024). High participation rates across regions—particularly in Asia—demonstrate that gaming is no longer merely recreational but has become an integral part of

adolescents' daily routines, social interactions, and digital culture. This normalization highlights the importance of examining gaming within the context of students' everyday lives rather than treating it as an isolated behavior.

Behavioral Patterns of Adolescent Gaming

Adolescent gaming habits are shaped by multiple behavioral and environmental factors, including frequency and duration of play, preferred game genres (e.g., MOBA, FPS), device usage (primarily smartphones), internet accessibility, and social interaction (Statista, 2023; Pew Research Center, 2024). Gaming is often prolonged and socially driven, with many students engaging daily and playing with peers. These patterns indicate that gaming behavior is deeply embedded in adolescents' lifestyle and social environment, making it a relevant factor in understanding their emotional and psychological experiences.

Psychological Effects of Online Gaming (Dual Outcomes)

A central theme in the RRL is the dual nature of online gaming's psychological effects. On one hand, excessive gaming is associated with negative outcomes, including anxiety, stress, emotional dysregulation, and social withdrawal (Ahmad & Al-Zoubi, 2022; Srivastava & Singh, 2025). Neurobiological studies further explain that gaming stimulates dopamine release, reinforcing addictive behavior and impairing impulse control (Brain & Life, 2024). On the other hand, moderate gaming may yield positive effects, such as improved cognitive functioning, problem-solving skills, and social interaction (Bediou et al., 2018; Entertainment Software Association, 2023). These contrasting findings suggest that the impact of gaming depends largely on level of engagement, context, and purpose.

Online Gaming and Anxiety (Complex Relationship)

The relationship between online gaming and anxiety is described as complex, inconsistent, and non-linear. Several studies report a positive correlation between excessive gaming and increased anxiety, stress, and depression (Arora & Kannan, 2022; Li et al., 2021). However, other research indicates no significant relationship, suggesting that anxiety may be influenced by external variables such as academic pressure, social environment, and personal factors (Palay & Arboleda, 2023; University of Oxford, 2022). Some studies further propose that anxiety may precede gaming, with adolescents using gaming as a response to existing emotional difficulties. This highlights that gaming may function as a cause, consequence, or coping response depending on the situation.

Online Gaming as a Coping Mechanism

A dominant theme in the literature is the role of gaming as a coping strategy, particularly an emotion-focused one. Anchored in the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, adolescents often use gaming to escape stress, regulate emotions, and manage anxiety (Wang & Chen, 2021; Kardefelt-Winther, 2024). While this may provide temporary

relief, excessive reliance on gaming can lead to maladaptive coping behaviors such as avoidance, withdrawal, and emotional suppression, which may worsen anxiety over time (Zhou et al., 2023; Stockdale & Coyne, 2024). Conversely, when balanced with other strategies, gaming can support adaptive coping, including relaxation and social connection.

Protective Factors and Adaptive Coping

The literature emphasizes the importance of protective factors in shaping healthier outcomes. Elements such as family support, peer relationships, self-regulation, and resilience play a crucial role in preventing excessive gaming and promoting adaptive coping (Chen et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2025). Adolescents who receive guidance and maintain balanced lifestyles are less likely to develop problematic gaming behaviors. This suggests that interventions should focus not only on reducing gaming but also on strengthening coping skills and support systems.

Philippine Context of Online Gaming

In the Philippine setting, online gaming is highly prevalent and culturally embedded, with a large proportion of internet users actively engaged in gaming (Perez et al., 2024; Kapoor & Subida, 2023). Local studies mirror global findings, showing both risks (e.g., anxiety, academic decline) and benefits (e.g., socialization, identity formation) of gaming. Cultural acceptance of gaming, alongside increasing digital access, underscores the need for context-specific research and interventions tailored to Filipino students.

Gaps in the Literature

The review of related literature identifies several important gaps that warrant further investigation. First, there is a limited number of studies specifically focusing on junior high school students, as much of the existing research centers on older adolescents or college populations. Second, there is a lack of research conducted in non-urban or localized settings, particularly in areas such as Igpit, Digos City, where contextual factors may significantly influence students' gaming behaviors and psychological experiences. Third, existing studies often examine online gaming, anxiety, and coping mechanisms separately, resulting in insufficient integration of these key variables within a single framework. Lastly, there is a notable need for school-based and guidance-oriented interventions that translate research findings into practical strategies, especially in schools with limited access to professional counseling services.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (1984), which explains how people assess and respond to stress using different coping strategies. The theory states that stress happens when someone feels a situation is more than they can handle, leading them to use either problem-focused or emotion-focused

coping. Problem-focused coping means dealing with the source of stress directly, like asking for help or making a plan. Emotion-focused coping, on the other hand, involves managing feelings through avoidance, denial, or escape. In this study, online gaming may be a way for junior high school students to cope with stress, anxiety, or other mental health issues. Some students might use gaming in a healthy way to relax, socialize, or stimulate their minds, while others might play excessively to escape their emotions, which can lead to problematic gaming, more anxiety, and social withdrawal.

This study also uses Cognitive Behavioral Theory (CBT) to better understand the psychological processes behind anxiety and behavior. CBT says that thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are connected, and that negative thinking can cause emotional distress and affect how people act. For junior high school students, negative thoughts about school, friends, or personal issues can lead to anxiety, which may influence them to play online games. Online gaming can provide short-term relief from these thoughts, but if used too much, it may reinforce unhealthy coping habits.

Together, these theories provide a clear framework for understanding how online gaming, mental health, and coping strategies are connected. Cognitive Behavioral Theory explains how negative thinking can lead to anxiety and shape behavior, while the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping shows how people deal with stress in healthy or unhealthy ways. Looking at both theories, online gaming can be seen as a way to manage emotions. When used in moderation, it may help students regulate their feelings, but if overused, it can increase anxiety and lead to unhealthy coping. This framework helps examine how online gaming affects anxiety and how coping strategies play a role for junior high school students in Igpit, Digos City.

Research Questions

Amid increasing concerns regarding excessive online gaming and its impact on students' academic performance and emotional well-being, this study examines the relationship between gaming habits, anxiety levels, and coping mechanisms among junior high school students at Igpit National High School. In light of the absence of a licensed guidance counselor and the reliance on guidance designates, the study sought to generate evidence to inform the development of a practical and context-specific guidance program.

The study specifically addressed the following research questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the participants when it comes to:
 - 1.1 Age
 - 1.2 Gender
 - 1.3 Average Daily Gaming
 - 1.4 Device Used for Gaming
 - 1.5 Type of Games Mostly Played
 - 1.6 Internet Access
 - 1.7 Persons They Usually Play Online Games With
2. What are the reported problematic online gaming behavior of the students in terms of the core indicators of the Online Gaming Addiction Scale (OGAS)?

3. What is the extent of the anxiety levels of students involved in high levels of online gaming?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the level of online gaming and the reported anxiety levels among students?
5. What coping mechanisms are exhibited by students in relation to online gaming and anxiety, as reflected in their lived experiences?
6. What program can be proposed based on the findings of the study?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between anxiety levels and frequent online gaming among junior high school students at Igpit National High School.
2. Junior high school students at Igpit National High School report no significant relationship of online gaming on their anxiety levels and coping mechanisms.

Scope and Delimitation

This study examines the online gaming habits, anxiety levels, and coping mechanisms of junior high school students at Igpit National High School in Digos City during the 2024–2025 academic year. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on students who actively engage in online gaming for at least two hours per day. In the qualitative phase, the study was further narrowed to students exhibiting high gaming involvement, as measured by the Online Gaming Addiction Scale (OGAS), and moderate to severe anxiety, as assessed by the Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7). This approach enabled an in-depth exploration of their coping experiences. The study is restricted to these participants and variables, excluding students who do not meet the specified criteria. The findings are specific to Igpit National High School and may not be generalizable to other populations or settings.

METHODOLOGY

This section presents the research design, procedures, and analytical methods used to examine online gaming habits, anxiety levels, and coping mechanisms among junior high school students in Igpit, Digos City. It explains the mixed-methods approach for collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Additionally, this section describes the sampling techniques, instruments, data collection procedures, and ethical guidelines followed in this study.

Research Design

This study used a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to better understand the research problem. The quantitative phase measured and analyzed online gaming habits and anxiety levels among junior high school students. The qualitative phase explored students' personal experiences and

coping strategies in more detail. By using both methods, the study captured a more comprehensive picture of the issue and improved the validity and depth of the findings.

Quantitative Phase

For the quantitative phase of the study, data were collected to examine the demographic profile, online gaming habits, and anxiety levels of the respondents. Online gaming habits were measured using the Online Gaming Addiction Scale (OGAS), while anxiety levels were assessed using the Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7). Data were analyzed using statistical methods, including Pearson's correlation coefficient, to determine the relationship between online gaming habits and anxiety levels.

Qualitative Phase

During the qualitative phase, the study explored participants' lived experiences through interviews. Students who obtained high OGAS scores and exhibited moderate to severe anxiety levels were purposively selected for this phase. Interview responses were analyzed using thematic analysis, which identified emergent themes related to coping mechanisms

Integration Stage

In this stage of the study, both quantitative results and qualitative findings were integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between online gaming habits and anxiety levels. Statistical data obtained from the Online Gaming Addiction Scale (OGAS) and the Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7), including Pearson's r correlation coefficient, were combined with the thematic findings on coping mechanisms derived from the interviews. This integration enabled a deeper interpretation of the results by explaining not only the significant relationship between the variables but also the experiences and coping behaviors of the participants. The process followed established mixed-methods procedures, wherein quantitative and qualitative findings are merged to produce a more complete and meaningful interpretation of the research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The integrated findings then served as the basis for the development of a proposed guidance program.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Igpit National High School in Barangay Igpit, Digos City. This public school serves about 500 junior high students from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. The school is in a semi-urban area where most students have WiFi at home, though some use piso WiFi or mobile data instead. Because students have different ways to access the internet, many are involved in online gaming. The school was chosen for the study because gaming is common there and there are growing concerns about students' anxiety and how they cope. The researchers received approval from the school administration and the Department of Education to ensure the study followed proper procedures and ethical standards.

Participants

The study focused on junior high school students from Igpit National High School in Barangay Igpit, Digos City. Out of more than 500 students, 120 were chosen to participate. This number meets the recommended minimum for correlational research, which calls for at least 100 respondents to ensure reliable results (John W. Creswell & J. David Creswell, 2023; Louis Cohen et al., 2018).

Criteria for Selection

Purposive sampling was used to select participants directly relevant to the study's objectives, focusing on students who regularly engage in online gaming, particularly those who spend more than 2 hours per day. This approach enables the intentional selection of individuals capable of providing meaningful and information-rich data aligned with the research goals, as supported by Michael Quinn Patton (2015) and Johnny Saldaña (2021). Adolescents were chosen as participants due to their high activity in digital environments and increased susceptibility to behavioral and emotional changes associated with gaming. Recent studies have established associations between excessive gaming and heightened anxiety, as well as other psychosocial concerns among adolescents (Twenge, 2020; Paulus et al., 2022; Cheng et al., 2023).

Participants were selected according to the following criteria: (1) enrollment as a junior high school student at Igpit National High School; (2) regular engagement in online gaming; (3) preference for those who spend at least two hours per day playing online games; and (4) willingness to participate in the study and provide informed consent.

In the qualitative phase, 16 participants were selected through criterion-based purposive sampling. Selection was based on specific characteristics relevant to the study, particularly higher levels of gaming involvement and anxiety. The inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) high scores on the Online Gaming Addiction Scale (OGAS); (2) moderate to severe anxiety levels as measured by the Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7); and (3) willingness to participate in an in-depth interview. This sampling strategy was designed to ensure participants could provide detailed, meaningful insights into coping behaviors and lived experiences. The sample size of 16 participants aligns with qualitative research recommendations, which suggest a range of 5 to 25 participants to achieve data saturation, depending on the research design, as supported by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2021) and Sarah J. Tracy (2020).

Sample Size Determination

The sample size for the quantitative phase was determined using power analysis, which is appropriate for correlational studies. Using a medium effect size, 0.05 level of significance, and 0.80 statistical power, the required minimum sample was 84 participants (Cohen, 1992; Faul et al., 2009). Since the study included 120 respondents, the sample size was considered adequate. Purposive sampling was then used to select students who regularly engage in online gaming, particularly those who spend at least two hours per day gaming.

Research Instruments

Quantitative and qualitative instruments were utilized to comprehensively measure key variables and enhance understanding of the research problem. Standardized tools assessed online gaming behavior and anxiety levels, while a structured interview guide explored participants' lived experiences and coping mechanisms. To ensure suitability for the target population, instruments were adapted and localized. All instruments underwent expert validation to confirm reliability and content validity.

The questionnaire and interview guide were reviewed by professionals in guidance, counseling, and education to evaluate the relevance, clarity, and appropriateness of each item relative to the study's objectives. Revisions were made based on their feedback to improve content and structure. This process ensured the instruments effectively measured online gaming habits, anxiety levels, and coping mechanisms among respondents.

Quantitative Research Instruments

Two internationally validated instruments were adapted and localized to measure the core variables of the study within the respondents' context. The first instrument, the Online Gaming Addiction Scale (OGAS) developed by Lemmens, Valkenburg, and Peter (2009), assessed the severity of problematic gaming behavior. This scale evaluates seven dimensions of behavioral addiction based on DSM criteria: salience, tolerance, mood modification, relapse, withdrawal, conflict, and problems. These dimensions provide a comprehensive assessment of gaming-related behaviors among adolescents.

The second instrument, the Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7) developed by Spitzer et al. (2006), measured students' anxiety levels over the preceding two-week period. The GAD-7 demonstrates strong psychometric properties, including high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.92$), and effectively classifies anxiety as minimal, mild, moderate, or severe.

Both instruments were adapted and localized to ensure suitability for the local context. Expert validation by professionals in guidance and counseling and educational research established content validity. This process confirmed that the items were culturally relevant, clear, and appropriate for the target population. Reliability testing was conducted to verify the consistency of the instruments, ensuring that the collected data were valid and reliable for the study.

The relationship between the severity of online gaming and participants' anxiety levels was examined by statistically analyzing data from the OGAS and GAD-7 using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (Pearson's r). This method measured the strength and direction of the linear relationship between these variables and served as the basis for testing the study's hypothesis.

Qualitative Research Instruments

A structured interview guide served as the qualitative instrument for this study, aiming to further investigate and elucidate the results from the quantitative phase. The interview questions were specifically crafted to capture students' lived experiences,

perceptions, and coping mechanisms related to online gaming, with particular focus on its function as an emotional refuge and its association with anxiety.

The interview guide was developed based on the results of the Online Gaming Addiction Scale (OGAS), the Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7), and indicators identified in the review of related literature. The questions addressed key areas including gaming routines, emotional responses, self-regulation of gaming behavior, academic impact, and social influences. This approach ensured that the qualitative data would yield meaningful and in-depth explanations of the patterns observed in the quantitative findings.

To ensure validity and appropriateness, the interview questions underwent expert validation by professionals in guidance and counseling as well as educational research. Feedback from these experts was incorporated to refine the clarity, relevance, and coherence of the questions, thereby establishing content validity and confirming the instrument's suitability for the target population.

The structured interview was administered to a purposively selected group of 16 students who obtained high scores on both the OGAS and GAD-7. With participants' consent, responses were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis in accordance with Braun and Clarke's framework. This process generated rich, detailed, and descriptive data that complemented and enhanced the understanding of the statistical results.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data collection process was organized into three distinct stages to ensure logistical efficiency and adherence to ethical standards. Each stage was carefully planned to facilitate smooth implementation while minimizing disruption to school activities. This systematic approach also ensured that all procedures were conducted in accordance with approved research protocols.

First Stage

The initial stage focused on administrative coordination, forming the foundation of the research process. Permission was formally obtained from the District Supervisor of Digos City Schools, and close coordination with the Principal of Igpit National High School secured approval for the study. Planning and consultation established a data collection schedule that did not disrupt regular class activities or school operations. This stage ensured compliance with all necessary protocols and institutional policies, facilitating a smooth and ethically compliant implementation of the research.

Second stage

The second stage involved obtaining ethical consent from all participants. As the respondents were minors, informed consent forms were provided to their parents or guardians, outlining the study's purpose, procedures, and the voluntary nature of participation. Student assent was also obtained to confirm that participants understood their involvement, including their right to decline participation or withdraw at any time without penalty. This approach ensured adherence to ethical standards by respecting the

autonomy, rights, and welfare of all participants, while maintaining transparency and accountability during data collection.

Third Stage

The final stage was the administration of the survey and subsequent interviews. Quantitative surveys were administered in a controlled classroom setting to ensure focus and privacy. Following the analysis of the survey data, the qualitative phase commenced, consisting of structured interviews with 16 purposively selected students who exhibited the highest risk indicators. These interviews were conducted in a private, comfortable environment to encourage honest and open communication regarding the students' digital lives and mental health.

Data Analysis

Data analysis incorporated both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, summarized respondents' profiles, online gaming habits, and anxiety levels. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (Pearson's r) assessed the relationship between gaming severity and anxiety.

During the qualitative phase, interview data were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis in accordance with Braun and Clarke's framework. Findings from both phases were integrated to offer a comprehensive understanding of the results and to inform the development of the proposed guidance program.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data in this study were analyzed using statistical methods that matched the research goals. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to summarize the participants' demographic information, online gaming habits, and anxiety levels. These statistics helped show how the data were spread out and what the typical values were. Pearson's r was used to measure how strongly and in what direction online gaming severity and anxiety levels were related. The hypothesis was tested using a predetermined level of significance to see if the results were statistically meaningful. These findings were then combined with qualitative data to give a fuller picture of the research problem.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data collected from structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the Braun and Clarke framework. Recorded responses were transcribed verbatim to ensure data accuracy and completeness. The data were reviewed multiple times to facilitate familiarization, after which significant statements were coded and meaningful patterns were identified. These codes were organized into broader categories and subsequently developed into key themes that represent participants' lived experiences, perceptions, and coping mechanisms related to online gaming and anxiety. Themes were reviewed, refined, and clearly defined to maintain coherence and relevance to the research objectives. This systematic approach generated rich, in-depth insights that complemented and provided deeper explanations for the quantitative findings.

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results obtained from junior high school students at Igpit National High School. The analysis addresses the six specific research problems, with findings interpreted using Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping by Lazarus & Folkman, , the principles of Cognitive Behavioral Theory (CBT) developed by Aaron T. Beck, and recent literature on digital behavior. These theoretical frameworks facilitate a comprehensive understanding of how students appraise stress, employ coping mechanisms, and form thought and behavior patterns associated with online gaming and anxiety. The results are organized according to the study's six research questions to ensure a clear, systematic, and theory-based presentation.

Research Question No. 1. Demographic profile of the participants in terms of age, gender. Average daily gaming, device used for gaming, type of games mostly played, internet access and whom they usually played with.

Table 1.1
Demographic Profile of the Online Gaming of Junior High School Students
in Igpit Digos City in Terms of Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
11 - 15 YO	109	90.9
15 - 20 YO	11	9.2
Total	120	100

Table 1.1 presents the age distribution of the 120 student participants. The majority (90.9%) are aged 11–15, placing them in early adolescence, while only 9.2% fall within the 15–20 age group. Consequently, the findings primarily reflect early adolescent experiences, a developmental stage marked by emotional sensitivity, identity formation, and heightened influence of digital media and peers.

The predominance of early adolescents in the sample suggests that online gaming behavior is influenced by developmental factors, particularly the ongoing development of self-regulation skills. The observed tendency for many students to engage in gaming for extended periods, especially during weekends, indicates a shift from casual use to habitual engagement. This pattern may begin to impact academic responsibilities and family interactions.

According to Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping , students may perceive gaming as both a source of enjoyment and a coping mechanism for stress. Cognitive Behavioral Theory further explains that repeated gaming behavior can be reinforced by cognitive patterns that utilize gaming to manage emotions. Although

gaming offers relaxation and social interaction (Park et al., 2024), the high engagement observed among this developmentally vulnerable group (Kim et al., 2022; Saini & Hodgins, 2023) underscores the importance of promoting more adaptive coping strategies.

1.2 Gender

Gender was considered to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents. This variable helps identify differences in gaming involvement between males and females.

Table 1.2
Demographic Profile of the Online Gaming of Junior High School Students
in Igpit Digos City in Terms of Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	68	56.7
Female	52	43.3
Total	120	100.0

Table 1.2 indicates that 56.7% (n = 68) of respondents are male, while 43.3% (n = 52) are female. Although there are marginally more male students, the gender distribution remains relatively balanced.

The greater proportion of male respondents may reflect broader trends in online gaming participation, where male students are typically more involved than female students. Thus, the observed gaming habits in this study may be influenced by gender-based preferences and patterns. However, the substantial participation of female students suggests that online gaming is increasingly prevalent among both genders.

Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping suggests that both male and female students may use online gaming as a coping mechanism for stress, although the frequency and intensity of play may differ between genders. Cognitive Behavioral Theory further suggests that students of both genders may develop comparable gaming habits as a means of relaxation or escape. These findings indicate that, while gender differences are relevant, the relationship between online gaming and anxiety is significant for all students.

1.3 Average Daily Gaming

Average daily gaming was analyzed to determine how much time students spend on online gaming. This provides a basis for understanding their level of engagement.

Table 1.3

Demographic Profile of the Online Gaming of Junior High School Students in Igpit Digos City in Terms of Average Daily Gaming

Average Daily Gaming	Frequency	Percentage
1 - 2 hours	62	51.7
3 - 4 hours	35	29.2
5 hours	13	10.8
More than 5 hours	10	8.3
Total	120	100.0

Table 1.3 presents respondents' average daily gaming time. The majority (51.7%) spend 1–2 hours gaming per day, while 29.2% play for 3–4 hours. Additionally, 10.8% of students reported gaming for 5 hours, and 8.3% spends more than 5 hours daily. This distribution demonstrates that although most students engage in moderate gaming, a substantial proportion participate in extended gaming sessions.

The presence of students who game for 3 hours or more (a combined 48.3%) suggests a significant level of engagement that may extend beyond recreational use into potentially excessive or problematic behavior. This pattern reflects the growing integration of gaming into students' daily routines, which may be influenced by increased accessibility and opportunities for social interaction on digital platforms.

According to Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, students may perceive gaming as an effective emotion-focused coping strategy for managing stress, boredom, or academic pressure. Cognitive Behavioral Theory further suggests that repeated gaming behavior is reinforced by positive emotional outcomes, such as enjoyment and temporary relief, which may encourage prolonged use. While moderate gaming is generally considered harmless, extended durations, particularly those exceeding 4–5 hours, raise concerns regarding potential impacts on academic performance, physical health, and social functioning. These findings underscore the importance of promoting balanced gaming habits and fostering healthier coping mechanisms among students.

1.4 Device Used for Gaming

The device used for gaming was analyzed to identify the common platforms utilized by the respondents. This helps in understanding their level of access to online games.

Table 1.4

Demographic Profile of the Online Gaming of Junior High School Students in Igpit Digos City in Terms of Device Used for Gaming

Device Used for Gaming	Frequency	Percentage
Mobile Phone	111	92.5
Laptop	9	7.5
Total	120	100

Table 1.4 indicates that the majority of respondents (92.5%) use mobile phones for gaming, whereas only 7.5% use laptops. These findings demonstrate a strong preference for mobile gaming among junior high school students. The prevalence of mobile phone use for gaming indicates that accessibility and convenience are significant factors for students. Mobile devices are affordable, portable, and widely available, particularly in areas where internet connectivity relies on mobile data or piso WiFi. Consequently, students are able to engage in gaming at any time and location, potentially resulting in more frequent and prolonged gaming sessions. Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping suggests that easy access to mobile gaming may provide students with a rapid means of coping with stress or boredom. Cognitive Behavioral Theory further suggests that the constant availability of games on mobile devices can reinforce habitual gaming behaviors, as students frequently use gaming for emotional relief or entertainment. Although mobile gaming offers convenience and facilitates social connection, its accessibility may also contribute to excessive use and diminished self-regulation. These findings underscore the need for guidance programs that promote responsible gaming and digital discipline among students.

1.5 Type of Game Mostly Played

The type of games played by students were examined to identify their gaming preferences and patterns of engagement. Different game genres may influence behavior and level of involvement.

Table 1.5

Demographic Profile of the Online Gaming of Junior High School Students in Igpit Digos City in Terms of Type of Game Mostly Played

Type of Game Mostly Played	Frequency	Percentage
Online Multiplayer	107	89.2
Role Playing Adventure	10	8.3

Strategy Situation	3	2.5
Total	120	100

Table 1.5 presents the distribution of game types predominantly played by respondents. A large majority (89.2%) prefer online multiplayer games, whereas only 8.3% engage in role-playing adventure games and 2.5% in strategy-based games. These results demonstrate a strong dominance of online multiplayer gaming among junior high school students.

The preference for online multiplayer games suggests that social interaction, competition, and real-time engagement are key factors influencing students' gaming behavior. These games provide immediate feedback, peer interaction, and a sense of achievement, which can increase engagement and extend gaming sessions. This finding aligns with King et al. (2020), who emphasized that highly interactive and immersive game features are associated with increased gaming involvement and a potential risk for problematic use.

According to Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, students may perceive online multiplayer gaming as a source of emotional relief and social connection, utilizing it as an emotion-focused coping strategy. Cognitive Behavioral Theory further explains that repeated exposure to rewarding gaming experiences reinforces continued engagement through positive emotional outcomes such as enjoyment and social validation. Kim et al. (2022) and Saini and Hodgins (2023) highlight that adolescents are particularly vulnerable to excessive gaming due to developmental factors and reinforcement mechanisms. Park et al. (2024) note that gaming is frequently used for stress relief and socialization. While online multiplayer games offer benefits such as relaxation and peer interaction, their highly engaging nature may increase the risk of overdependence, especially when gaming begins to interfere with academic and social responsibilities. These findings highlight the need to promote balanced gaming habits and encourage more adaptive coping strategies among students.

1.6 Internet Access

The level of internet access among students was examined to assess its influence on their online gaming behavior. Access to the internet enables continuous participation in gaming activities.

Table 1.6

Demographic Profile of the Online Gaming of Junior High School Students in Igpit Digos City in Terms of Have Internet Access

Internet Access	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	104	86.7

No	16	13.3
Total	120	100

Table 1.6 presents data on respondents' internet access, indicating that a large majority (86.7%) possess internet connectivity, while only 13.3% lack access. This demonstrates that most students are digitally connected, thereby facilitating high accessibility to online gaming within the study context. The high level of internet access suggests that connectivity is a significant factor influencing students' gaming behavior. Many students have WiFi access at home, while others utilize mobile data and piso WiFi services, which are prevalent in the community. Such flexible and on-demand access allows students to participate in online gaming at any time and location, thereby increasing the likelihood of frequent and extended gaming sessions. This observation aligns with King et al. (2020), who emphasized that greater access to digital platforms correlates with increased gaming engagement and a heightened risk of problematic use.

According to Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, the availability of internet access enables students to use online gaming as an emotion-focused coping strategy in response to stress, boredom, or academic pressure. Cognitive Behavioral Theory further posits that easy and constant access reinforces habitual gaming behavior, as students repeatedly engage in gaming to obtain emotional relief and enjoyment. Park et al. (2024) highlighted that adolescents frequently use online gaming for relaxation and social interaction, while Kim et al. (2022) and Saini and Hodgins (2023) observed that increased accessibility elevates the risk of excessive gaming among adolescents.

Although internet access offers opportunities for learning and communication, its widespread availability, particularly through mobile data and piso WiFi, raises concerns regarding overexposure to gaming and potential dependency. These findings underscore the importance of promoting responsible internet use and fostering healthier coping strategies among students.

1.7 Persons They Usually Play With

The usual gaming companions of the respondents were analyzed to determine who they most often play with. This helps in understanding the social dimension of their gaming habits.

Table 1.7
Demographic Profile of the Online Gaming of Junior High School Students in Igpit Digos City in Terms of Persons They Usually Play With

Persons They Usually Play With	Frequency	Percentage
School Friends	71	59.2

Online Friends Only	35	29.2
Family Members	9	7.5
Alone	5	4.2
Total	120	100.0

Table 1.7 presents the distribution of individuals with whom respondents typically play online games. The data indicate that the majority (59.2%) play with school friends, while 29.2% play exclusively with online friends. A smaller proportion play with family members (7.5%) or alone (4.2%). These findings suggest that online gaming among respondents is predominantly a social activity, with a primary focus on peer interaction.

The predominance of playing with school friends suggests that gaming functions as an extension of real-life social relationships, reinforcing peer bonding and group belonging. The substantial proportion of students who play exclusively with online friends underscores the role of digital platforms in broadening social networks beyond immediate environments. This pattern demonstrates the increasing integration of social interaction within gaming environments, where communication, teamwork, and competition are central. These findings are consistent with Park et al. (2024), who emphasize that adolescents frequently use online gaming for socialization and connection, and with King et al. (2020), who note that the social features of games contribute to prolonged engagement.

According to Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, playing with peers can be appraised as a source of emotional support and stress relief, positioning gaming as an effective emotion-focused coping strategy. Similarly, Cognitive Behavioral Theory posits that positive social experiences, such as peer interaction and validation, reinforce repeated gaming behavior. Although gaming with others can promote social connectedness, reliance on both offline and online peer interactions may also increase the frequency and duration of gameplay. These findings underscore the need to guide students toward balanced social engagement and to encourage alternative forms of interaction beyond gaming environments.

Research Question No. 2. Reported Problematic Online Gaming Behaviors of the Students

The Online Gaming Addiction Scale (OGAS) was used to assess the level of problematic online gaming behaviors among the respondents. This tool measures seven core indicators, namely: salience, tolerance, mood modification, relapse, withdrawal, conflict, and problems, which reflect the behavioral and psychological aspects of gaming. The use of OGAS provides a comprehensive basis for identifying signs of gaming addiction among students. Table 2.1 presents the weighted mean, descriptive rating, and verbal interpretation of each indicator, showing the extent of problematic gaming behaviors among the respondents.

Table 2.1
Online Gaming Addiction Scale (OGAS)

Salience	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Rating	Verbal Interpretation
1	3.03	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
2	2.92	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
3	3.01	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
4	2.91	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
Composite Mean	2.97	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
Tolerance	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Rating	Verbal Interpretation
5	3.08	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
6	3.02	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
7	2.93	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
Composite Mean	Descriptive Rating	Verbal Interpretation	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
Mood Modification	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Rating	Verbal Interpretation
8	3.32	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
9	3.36	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
10	3.50	O	Strong Signs of Problematic Gaming

11	3.30	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
Composite Mean	3.37	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
Relapse	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Rating	Verbal Interpretation
12	3.04	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
13	3.34	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
14	3.15	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
15	3.18	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
Composite Mean	3.18	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
Withdrawal	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Rating	Verbal Interpretation
16	2.93	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
17	2.84	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
18	2.98	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
Composite Mean	29.2	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
Conflict	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Rating	Verbal Interpretation
19	2.93	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
20	2.88	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies

21	3.03	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
22	2.78	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
Composite Mean	2.90	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
Problems	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Rating	Verbal Interpretation
23	3.04	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
24	2.95	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
25	3.22	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
26	3.26	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
Composite Mean	3.12	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies
OVERALL MEAN	3.07	M	Occasional Addictive Tendencies

Legend: 5(4.50-5.00) - Very Often (VO)-Severe addiction, Major impact on behavior, 4(3.50-4.49) – Often(O)-Strong signs of problematic addictions,3(2.50--3.49)- sometimes (S)-Occasional addictive tendencies, 2(1.50-2.49)- Rarely (R)-Minimal signs, normal gaming habit, 1(1.00-1.49)-Never(N)-No signs of gaming addiction

Salience (Composite Mean = 2.97, Moderate)

The salience indicator demonstrates that gaming constitutes a significant aspect of students' daily lives, though it does not yet dominate their activities. Students incorporate gaming into their routines and frequently consider it, but it has not replaced their primary priorities. At this stage, gaming holds psychological significance for students, suggesting the emergence of an early attachment. Although currently manageable, this level of salience may serve as a basis for increased dependency if reinforced over time

Tolerance (Composite Mean = 3.01; Moderate Level)

The tolerance findings indicate that students are spending progressively more time gaming to achieve the same level of satisfaction. This pattern reflects a gradual escalation in gaming engagement. These results suggest the emergence of a behavioral pattern

characterized by increased gaming duration, as students are less satisfied with short gaming sessions. This trend may indicate the early progression toward excessive gaming habits.

Mood Modification (Composite Mean = 3.37, Moderate – Highest)

Mood modification had the highest average score, which suggests that students mainly use gaming to handle emotions like stress, boredom, or negative feelings. For many, gaming is an important way to cope.

This is the main reason students play games, showing they often turn to gaming to cope with their emotions. Because of this, there is a higher risk of becoming dependent on gaming for emotional regulation.

Relapse (composite mean = 3.18, moderate)

The relapse indicator demonstrates that students experience difficulty to decrease their gaming time and frequently revert to previous gaming habits after attempts to decrease usage. This pattern reflects an emerging loss of control, indicating that gaming behavior is becoming habitual. It further suggests that students may already be experiencing challenges with self-regulation.

Withdrawal (Composite Mean = 2.92, Moderate Level)

The results indicate that students experience moderate discomfort when unable to engage in gaming, though the intensity remains limited. These findings suggest the onset of early emotional dependence.

These results indicate the initial stage of psychological reliance on gaming, in which the absence of gaming triggers mild negative emotions. This pattern may serve as an early indicator of more severe dependence.

Conflict (Composite Mean = 2.90, Moderate – Lowest)

Conflict had the lowest average score, which shows that gaming has not led to major interpersonal or academic problems so far, although some minor issues might already be present. The effects of gaming are still mostly under control, but the moderate scores suggest that problems could develop if gaming increases over time.

Problems (Composite Mean = 3.12, Moderate Severity)

The problems indicator demonstrates that certain students are already experiencing adverse effects from gaming, including interference with academic performance and daily responsibilities. This finding reflects early functional consequences, suggesting that gaming is beginning to impact critical aspects of students' lives, although the severity remains moderate.

Overall Interpretation of Online Gaming Addiction Levels

The findings indicate that most students display moderate or occasional symptoms of online gaming addiction, with mood modification identified as the most prominent indicator, followed by relapse and related behaviors. This pattern demonstrates that students often use gaming to cope with emotional states such as stress, boredom, and negative affect, which may gradually develop into habitual behavior. While severe addiction is not prevalent, the presence of tolerance, relapse, and emerging problems suggests a progression from casual gaming toward potentially problematic use. This trend aligns with King et al. (2020), who emphasized that prolonged engagement and reinforcing game features increase the risk of developing problematic gaming behaviors over time. Similarly, Kim et al. (2022) and Saini and Hodgins (2023) report that adolescents are particularly susceptible to these patterns due to ongoing emotional and cognitive development.

Grounded in Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (1984), these findings indicate that students perceive online gaming as an effective emotion-focused coping strategy for managing stress and regulating emotions. Supporting this, Park et al. (2024) observed that adolescents frequently engage in gaming for relaxation, emotional relief, and social interaction. Additionally, Cognitive Behavioral Theory posits that repeated exposure to positive emotional outcomes reinforces gaming behavior, thereby increasing the likelihood of continued and prolonged engagement. Although gaming offers temporary benefits, this reinforcing cycle may result in dependence if not adequately addressed. These results underscore the escalating risk of problematic gaming behaviors and highlight the necessity for early intervention strategies that promote self-regulation, emotional awareness, and the adoption of healthier coping mechanisms among students.

Table 2.2 presents the summary of the Online Gaming Addiction Scale (OGAS) scores of the respondents, showing the distribution of their gaming addiction levels based on mean scores, frequency, and percentage. It provides an overview of the extent of gaming behavior, from minimal to more problematic levels, among the students.

Table 2.2
Summary of Online Gaming Addiction Scale of the Respondents (OGAS)

Gaming Addiction	Mean Score	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
Very Low/Never	1.00-1.49	No Signs of Gaming Addiction		
Low/Rarely	1.50-2.49	Minimal Signs/Normal Gaming Habit	24	20.0
Moderate/Sometimes	2.50-3.49	Occasional Addictive Tendencies	57	47.5

High/Often	3.50-4.49	Strong Signs of of Problematic Gaming	38	31.7
Very High/Very Often	4.50-5.00	Severe Addiction/Major Impact on Behavior	1	8.0
TOTAL			120	100

Table 2.2 displays the distribution of respondents' online gaming addiction levels as measured by the Online Gaming Addiction Scale (OGAS). The largest proportion of students (47.5%) is categorized as moderate/sometimes, indicating occasional addictive tendencies. This is followed by 31.7% in the *high/often* category, which reflects strong signs of problematic gaming behavior. Additionally, 20.0% of respondents are classified as *low/rarely*, suggesting minimal signs and generally typical gaming habits. Only one respondent (0.8%) is categorized as *very high/very often*, indicating severe addiction, while none fall under the *very low/never* category.

The findings indicate that, although severe gaming addiction is uncommon, a substantial proportion of students experience moderate to high levels of gaming involvement. The combined percentage of respondents in the moderate and high categories (79.2%) demonstrates that gaming is a prominent activity among students and may be shifting from recreational use to more habitual or problematic behavior. This trend suggests a potential risk, as sustained engagement could interfere with academic performance, social relationships, and overall well-being.

Grounded in Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, these results suggest that students may use online gaming as an emotion-focused coping strategy to manage stress, boredom, or negative experiences. Cognitive Behavioral Theory further posits that repeated exposure to positive reinforcement, such as enjoyment, achievement, and social interaction, strengthens gaming behavior and increases its persistence over time. Although the low incidence of severe addiction is encouraging, the high proportion of students exhibiting moderate to strong gaming tendencies indicates a transitional stage and underscores the need for early intervention programs that foster self-regulation, emotional awareness, and healthier coping mechanisms.

Research Question No. 3: Anxiety levels of students involved in excessive online gaming.

Table 3.1 presents the anxiety levels of students involved in excessive online gaming, addressing Problem No. 3 of the study. The table summarizes the weighted mean scores, descriptive ratings, and verbal interpretations of selected anxiety indicators. These results provide an overview of the extent to which students experience anxiety-related symptoms in relation to their gaming behavior.

Table 3.1
Anxiety Level of Students in Excessive Online Gaming

Excessive Worry About Gaming	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Rating	Verbal Interpretation
1	1.22	Low	Symptoms occurs, minimal impact
2	1.35	Low	Symptoms occurs, minimal impact
Difficulty Controlling Gaming Thoughts	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Rating	Verbal Interpretation
3	1.36	Low	Symptoms occurs, minimal impact
4	1.28	Low	Symptoms occurs, minimal impact
Physical Symptoms of Gaming Related Anxiety	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Rating	Verbal Interpretation
5	1.32		Symptoms occurs, minimal impact
6	1.30		Symptoms occurs, minimal impact
Avoidance and Social Impact	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Rating	Verbal Interpretation
7	1.24	Low	Symptoms occurs, minimal impact
Composite Mean	1.29	Low	Symptoms occurs, minimal impact

The table displays the anxiety levels of students engaged in excessive online gaming across several dimensions: excessive worry, difficulty controlling thoughts,

physical symptoms, and avoidance or social impact. The overall composite mean of **1.29**, classified as low, suggests that although anxiety symptoms are present among respondents, these symptoms generally exert minimal influence on daily functioning.

All weighted means across the indicators fall within the *low* range, indicating that students experience only mild anxiety, such as occasional worry about gaming, slight difficulty in controlling gaming-related thoughts, and minor physical or social effects. Difficulty controlling gaming-related thoughts (means of 1.36 and 1.28) and physical symptoms (means of 1.32 and 1.30) are marginally higher than other areas, which indicates that cognitive and physical responses to gaming are present but not severe. In contrast, avoidance and social impact (mean of 1.24) remain lower, suggesting that gaming-related anxiety has not substantially disrupted students' social interactions or daily responsibilities.

These findings indicate that although students demonstrate moderate levels of gaming behavior, as reflected in the OGAS results, this behavior has not resulted in elevated anxiety levels. This outcome may suggest that students perceive gaming as manageable or potentially beneficial in certain contexts. According to Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, students may evaluate gaming as a coping resource rather than a stressor, which could reduce the intensity of anxiety symptoms. Similarly, Cognitive Behavioral Theory posits that positive reinforcement from gaming, such as enjoyment and social interaction, may buffer negative emotional responses and help maintain low anxiety levels despite frequent engagement.

However, the consistent presence of minimal symptoms across all indicators suggests a potential underlying vulnerability. Should gaming behavior become more excessive or problematic over time, these mild symptoms may intensify and develop into more significant anxiety concerns. Therefore, although current anxiety levels are low, the findings underscore the importance of early monitoring and intervention to prevent the escalation of gaming-related behaviors and associated psychological effects.

Summary of Anxiety Levels of Students

Table 3.2 presents the summary of the anxiety levels of students engaged in online gaming, addressing the extent of anxiety experienced by the respondents. The table consolidates the overall mean scores and corresponding descriptive interpretations, providing a general overview of students' emotional conditions in relation to their gaming behavior. This serves as a basis for understanding how anxiety manifests among the participants and how it may influence their engagement in online gaming.

Table 3.2
Summary of Anxiety Level of Students

Anxiety Level	Mean Score	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
Very Low / Not at All	0.00-0.49	No Gaming Anxiety Symptom	17	14.2

Low / Mild	0.50-1.49	Symptom Occurs Occasionally/Minimal Impact	46	38.3
Moderate	1.50-2.49	Symptom is Noticeable and Occurs Regularly	42	35.0
High / Severe	2.50-3.00	Symptom is Present Almost Everyday/Strong Indicator of Risk	15	12.5
		TOTAL	120	100

The data presented in Table 3.2 indicate that the majority of students exhibit low to moderate levels of anxiety, with 38.3% (n=46) reporting mild symptoms and 35.0% (n=42) reporting moderate anxiety. Although anxiety related to online gaming is generally not severe for most students, it is present and observable in a substantial proportion (over 70%) of respondents. These individuals may experience occasional to regular symptoms, including worry, cognitive preoccupation, or mild physical effects, which suggests that gaming-related anxiety is present but remains manageable at this stage.

A notable finding is that 12.5% (n=15) of students are classified as experiencing high or severe anxiety. While this represents a smaller subset, it constitutes a significant at-risk population, as these students experience symptoms almost daily, potentially interfering with their functioning. This observation is consistent with the findings of Spitzer et al. (2006) on the GAD-7, which emphasize that moderate to severe anxiety levels are clinically relevant and may necessitate intervention. The identification of this group underscores the need for targeted guidance programs, particularly given the sensitivity of early adolescence as a developmental stage.

Conversely, 14.2% (n=17) of students reported very low or no anxiety, indicating that not all individuals are negatively affected by gaming. This variation suggests that the relationship between gaming and anxiety is not uniform, but may depend on individual differences, coping strategies, and specific gaming behaviors. Lemmens, Valkenburg, and Peter (2009) support this perspective, noting that problematic gaming behaviors vary in intensity and become concerning only when they begin to impact emotional and psychological well-being.

In summary, the findings indicate that while most students experience only mild to moderate anxiety, the existence of a significant high-risk group highlights the importance of early intervention. These results support the view that online gaming may function as a neutral or even beneficial activity for some individuals, while serving as a potential source of psychological distress for others, depending on the level of engagement and underlying coping mechanisms.

Research Question No. 4. Relationship between the severity of online gaming and the reported anxiety levels among students.

Table 4.1 presents the result of the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r), which was computed to determine the statistical relationship between the students' severity of online gaming (Problem No. 2) and their reported anxiety levels (Problem No. 3).

Table 4.1
Relationship Between the Severity of Online Gaming and the
Reported Anxiety Levels among Students

Variable	Computer Pearson “r” Value	Description	p-Value	Decision	Interpretation
Severity of Online Gaming Versus Reported Anxiety Level	0.667	High Correlation	0.001	Reject the Null Hypothesis	High

Note: $p\text{-value} \leq 0.05$ – significant, $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ – not significant

Table 4.1 presents the relationship between the severity of online gaming and reported anxiety levels among students, as measured by Pearson's correlation coefficient. The computed r -value of 0.667 indicates a strong positive correlation, demonstrating that increased severity of online gaming is associated with higher anxiety levels among students. These results indicate that excessive engagement in online gaming is closely linked to heightened anxiety symptoms among respondents.

The p -value of 0.001, which is below the standard alpha level of 0.05, indicates statistical significance. Consequently, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between online gaming severity and anxiety levels is rejected. This finding confirms that the observed association is unlikely to be due to chance and reflects a meaningful relationship between the variables.

Recent studies support this finding. Wartberg et al. (2021) found that problematic gaming behavior among adolescents is significantly associated with increased anxiety and other internalizing symptoms. Similarly, Bonnaire and Phan (2017) reported that excessive online gaming is linked to higher levels of emotional distress, including anxiety, particularly among youth who use gaming as a coping mechanism. Männikkö et al. (2020) further highlighted that higher gaming intensity is related to poorer psychological well-being, including elevated anxiety. Theoretically, these findings align with the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, which posits that individuals may engage in gaming to cope with stress, and with Cognitive Behavioral Theory, which suggests that maladaptive thought patterns and behaviors can reinforce anxiety. When gaming becomes excessive, it may transition from a coping strategy to a contributing factor in psychological distress.

In summary, the results demonstrate a strong and significant relationship between online gaming severity and anxiety levels. These findings underscore the need for timely and targeted interventions that promote healthier coping strategies and responsible gaming habits among students.

Table 4.2
Joint Display of Quantitative and Qualitative Results on Anxiety Levels and Gaming Behavior

Anxiety Level (Table 3.1 / 3.2)	Quantitative Description	Aligned Theme (Qualitative)	Representative Quote (Verbatim)	Integrated Interpretation
Very Low / Not at All (14.2%)	Minimal or No Anxiety Symptoms	Normalization / Coping Justification	"Gaming doesn't really affect my daily routine."	Some students perceive gaming as harmless, reflecting normalization or limited awareness of its impact
Low / Mild (38.3%)	Occasional Anxiety / Manageable	Emotional Dependence	"Gaming makes me really happy, but sometimes I don't have load"	Gaming functions as a positive emotional outlet, suggesting adaptive but potentially reinforcing coping behavior
Moderate (35.0%)	Noticeable and recurring anxiety	Preoccupation + Academic Impact	"I can't focus on homework because I want to play."	Anxiety begins to interfere with academic functioning, indicating imbalance and emerging maladaptive patterns.
High / Severe (12.5%)	Frequent and Intense Anxiety Symptoms	Loss of Control + External Regulation	"I only stop playing when my parents scold me—or when I run out of data.""	High anxiety is associated with impaired self-regulation, requiring external control and indicating elevated risk.

Table 4.2 provides an integrated analysis of quantitative and qualitative findings, illustrating the relationship between students' anxiety levels, lived experiences, and coping behaviors associated with online gaming. The joint display reveals a progressive

pattern in which higher anxiety levels correspond with greater psychological involvement and increasingly problematic gaming behaviors.

At the very low level (14.2%), students report minimal or no anxiety, and qualitative responses reflect a normalization of gaming. Statements such as “gaming doesn’t really affect my daily routine” indicate that these students perceive gaming as harmless. This pattern suggests either effective self-regulation or limited awareness of potential negative effects, consistent with adaptive functioning.

At the low or mild level (38.3%), students experience manageable anxiety, and qualitative data indicate emotional dependence. Gaming is described as a source of happiness and emotional relief, suggesting its role as an emotion-focused coping mechanism. Although this coping strategy may initially appear adaptive, reliance on gaming for mood regulation can gradually reinforce dependency if not balanced with alternative coping strategies.

At the moderate level (35.0%), anxiety becomes more pronounced and begins to interfere with daily functioning. Qualitative themes of preoccupation and academic impact emerge, as students report difficulty focusing on responsibilities due to gaming. This stage reflects a shift toward maladaptive coping, where gaming disrupts important domains such as academic performance, indicating imbalance and diminished self-control.

At the high or severe level (12.5%), students exhibit frequent and intense anxiety symptoms, accompanied by loss of control and reliance on external regulation. Responses indicate that gaming behavior persists despite negative consequences and is only interrupted by external factors such as parental intervention or lack of internet access. This pattern suggests impaired self-regulation and an elevated level of psychological risk.

In summary, the integrated findings indicate that gaming initially serves as a coping mechanism providing emotional relief for students, but can develop into a source of anxiety and dysfunction when excessive. This pattern supports the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, which posits that individuals appraise stress and engage in coping responses, as well as the Cognitive Behavioral Theory, which explains how repeated behaviors and thought patterns reinforce emotional outcomes. The table demonstrates that as gaming severity increases, coping strategies shift from adaptive to maladaptive, underscoring the importance of early, targeted interventions to promote healthier coping strategies and self-regulation among students.

Research Question No. 5 What coping mechanisms are exhibited by students in relation to online gaming and anxiety, as reflected in their lived experiences?

Table 5.1 presents the coping-related behaviors and experiences that emerged from the qualitative data gathered through structured interviews. It summarizes the key themes identified, along with their corresponding descriptions and interpretations, highlighting how students use online gaming as both an emotional outlet and a means of managing stress. The table also distinguishes between adaptive and maladaptive coping patterns reflected in the students’ narratives.

Table 5.1
Coping Related Behaviors and Experiences From Students' Narrative

Theme	Description	Coping Interpretation	Type of Coping
Emotional Dependence and Mood Modulation	Students use gaming for happiness, relaxation, and stress relief	Gaming serves as an emotional outlet to manage negative feelings	Adaptive (short-term)
Avoidance and Overreliance on Gaming	Students play longer, neglect tasks, and escape academic pressure	Gaming is used to avoid problems rather than solve them	Maladaptive
Loss of Control / Difficulty in Regulation	Students struggle to stop playing and extend gaming time	Indicates poor self-regulation in managing stress and behavior	Maladaptive
External Regulation	Students stop playing only due to parents or external factors	Reliance on others instead of internal coping control	Maladaptive
Normalization / Underestimation of Impact	Students claim gaming has no negative effects despite evidence	Cognitive coping through justification or denial	Maladaptive

Table 5.1 presents coping-related behaviors among students in relation to online gaming, revealing a progression from initially adaptive coping strategies to predominantly maladaptive ones. The identified themes suggest that although gaming may serve a functional purpose initially, prolonged and excessive use often results in negative behavioral and emotional outcomes.

The first theme, emotional dependence and mood modulation, demonstrates that students use gaming to experience happiness, relaxation, and stress relief. This behavior reflects an adaptive short-term coping mechanism, as gaming provides immediate emotional comfort. However, this strategy is limited because it does not address the underlying causes of stress, increasing vulnerability to dependency over time.

As coping behaviors progress, the themes shift toward avoidance and overreliance on gaming, with students beginning to neglect responsibilities and using gaming to

escape academic or personal pressures. This shift indicates a transition to maladaptive coping, as problems are avoided rather than addressed. This pattern suggests that gaming evolves from a source of relief to a means of disengagement from real-life. The theme of loss of control or difficulty in regulation further illustrates the negative trajectory, as students struggle to manage their gaming time and behavior. This difficulty reflects poor self-regulation, a key indicator of problematic behavior, since students are unable to balance gaming with other essential activities.

Similarly, the theme of external regulation indicates that students rely on parents or external factors to stop gaming rather than exercising internal control. This dependence suggests underdeveloped coping skills and reinforces maladaptive patterns, as behavior remains externally directed.

Lastly, normalization or underestimation of impact reveals a cognitive aspect of coping, in which students justify or deny the negative effects of gaming despite evidence. This cognitive distortion perpetuates maladaptive behavior by reducing awareness and delaying correction. Overall, the findings indicate that although gaming may initially function as a useful emotional coping strategy, it frequently evolves into maladaptive patterns characterized by avoidance, loss of control, and cognitive distortion. This progression aligns with the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, which posits that individuals initially engage in emotion-focused coping, and with Cognitive Behavioral Theory, which explains how repeated behaviors and thought patterns reinforce unhealthy coping mechanisms. These results underscore the need for interventions that promote self-regulation, problem-solving skills, and healthier coping alternatives among students.

From Emotional Relief to Maladaptive Coping

The findings indicate that although online gaming initially provides emotional relief for students, it progressively develops into a maladaptive coping mechanism marked by avoidance, diminished self-control, and reliance on external regulation. This trajectory aligns with the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, which asserts that individuals may begin with emotion-focused coping strategies, such as gaming for stress relief, but transition to maladaptive approaches when stressors persist. The Cognitive Behavioral Theory further supports this view, suggesting that repeated behaviors and cognitive distortions reinforce unhealthy coping patterns over time. Recent research corroborates this progression, demonstrating that gaming can serve both adaptive and maladaptive functions; however, excessive gaming is associated with heightened psychological distress and anxiety among adolescents. Empirical studies also reveal that problematic gaming correlates with neglect of responsibilities, decreased academic engagement, and emotional challenges, including anxiety and poor emotional regulation. In the Philippine context, research similarly identifies a significant relationship between internet gaming disorder and increased anxiety, stress, and other psychosocial issues among adolescent students. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that online gaming not only acts as a coping mechanism but also substantially affects students' emotional well-being and coping strategies. Consequently, the second null hypothesis, which posited that online gaming has no significant influence on anxiety levels and stress coping mechanisms, is not supported and is therefore rejected.

Research Question No. 6. Proposed Program Based on the Findings of the Study

This study addresses Statement of the Problem No. 6 by proposing a localized, evidence-based guidance program for Igpit National High School. Findings show a significant link between excessive online gaming and anxiety, with students often using gaming to escape stress. This indicates a reliance on avoidance coping strategies.

According to the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, students use gaming as an emotion-focused coping strategy, which can become maladaptive if excessive. Cognitive Behavioral Theory explains that repeated gaming reinforces unhealthy thoughts and behaviors. Wartberg et al. (2021) and Männikkö et al. (2020) also found that problematic gaming is linked to increased anxiety and poor psychological well-being.

Currently, the school's guidance services are handled by designated staff due to the lack of licensed counselors, which underscores the need for a structured program. The proposed Management Guidance Work Plan (MGWP) includes Digital Dialogue Workshops on emotional awareness, cognitive reframing, and responsible gaming. The program will identify at-risk students, provide small-group sessions, use monitoring tools, and offer follow-up support to encourage healthier coping and self-regulation.

Rationale of the Proposed Program

The increase in excessive online gaming among students has generated concerns regarding its impact on emotional well-being. At Igpit National High School, the present study identified a significant association between anxiety and excessive gaming, with many students employing maladaptive coping strategies, particularly avoidance through gaming. Qualitative data further indicate that students frequently use gaming as an emotional refuge and a means to escape stress.

According to the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, these findings indicate that students who experience high levels of stress and lack effective coping resources frequently engage in emotion-focused and avoidance behaviors. Cognitive Behavioral Theory posits that repeated reliance on gaming reinforces maladaptive thoughts and behaviors, thereby increasing anxiety over time. Wartberg et al. (2021) and Männikkö et al. (2020) similarly reported that problematic gaming is significantly associated with higher anxiety and reduced psychological well-being among adolescents.

The school currently operates without a licensed guidance counselor, with guidance services managed by teacher-designates. This situation highlights the necessity for a structured, practical, and sustainable intervention program that can be implemented by non-specialist personnel.

In response, the Digital Dialogue Workshops Program is proposed under the Management Guidance Work Plan (MGWP) to enhance students' digital and emotional intelligence, promote cognitive reframing, and encourage responsible online gaming. Through structured dialogue and skill-building activities, the program seeks to improve emotional regulation, strengthen adaptive coping strategies, and support students' overall well-being.

Table 6.1
Digital Dialogue Workshops Program (MGWP)

Objectives	Activities	Time Frame	Persons Involved	Resources Needed	Success Indicator	Funding Source
0. To equip guidance designates with basic facilitation and intervention skills	Conduct Capacity Training for Guidance Associates(ba sic counseling techniques, facilitation techniques, identifying at risk students, referral process	Pre Implementation (Week 0)	School Head, External Resource Speaker (if available), Guidance Designates	Training module, handouts, slides/presentation	Guidance designates demonstrate improved facilitation skills and readiness	School MOOE, INSET funds, or DepEd Division support; possible LGU/NGO partnership
1. To increase students' awareness of anxiety triggers and emotional responses	Conduct Digital Emotional Awareness Workshop (identifying stressors, emotional triggers, gaming patterns)	Week 1	Guidance Designate, Class Adviser	Printed modules, worksheets, projector (if available)	Students identify at least 2 personal stressors and triggers	School MOOE; PTA support; printed materials can be reproduced in school
2. To develop students' cognitive reframing skills in managing stress	Facilitate Cognitive Reframing Sessions (thought–feeling–behavior mapping, reframing negative thoughts)	Week 2	Guidance Designate, Teacher Facilitators	Activity sheets, reflection forms	Improved responses; reduced negative thinking patterns	School MOOE; use of reusable templates; minimal cost printing
3. To promote adaptive coping strategies	Conduct Coping Skills Training (problem-solving, peer sharing, relaxation techniques)	Week 3	Guidance Designate, Peer Facilitators	Handouts, relaxation guides	Increased use of problem-focused coping	PTA support; donations (printing/snacks optional); school resources

4. To encourage responsible and balanced gaming	Implement Responsible Gaming Dialogue Workshop (setting limits, digital balance plan)	Week 4	Guidance Designate, Class Adviser	Monitoring templates, trackers	Students follow personal gaming schedule	School MOOE; digital/printed trackers; no-cost implementation possible
---	---	--------	-----------------------------------	--------------------------------	--	--

The Digital Dialogue Workshops Program is based on study findings that identified a significant relationship between excessive online gaming and anxiety ($r = 0.667$). Quantitative and qualitative data indicate that students frequently use gaming as an emotional refuge and a means of avoiding stress, reflecting a reliance on maladaptive coping strategies.

Recent studies further support these findings. Wartberg et al. (2021) and Männikkö et al. (2020) found that problematic gaming among adolescents is associated with increased anxiety and reduced psychological well-being, particularly when gaming is used as a coping mechanism.

The program is anchored in the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which posits that students engage in gaming as an emotion-focused response to feeling overwhelmed. It also draws on Cognitive Behavioral Theory, which emphasizes that repeated reliance on gaming reinforces negative thought and behavioral patterns.

Because the school currently lacks a licensed guidance counselor, the program is structured to be practical and teacher-facilitated, ensuring implementation by designated staff. By incorporating Digital Emotional Intelligence, Cognitive Reframing, and Coping Skills Training, the program seeks to enhance students' emotional regulation, foster adaptive coping, and promote responsible gaming behavior.

Conclusions

The conclusions of the study synthesize the key findings, highlighting the overall relationship between online gaming habits, anxiety levels, and coping mechanisms among junior high school students.

1. The findings indicate that online gaming among students is reinforced by developmental and social factors, especially during early adolescence, a period marked by increased peer influence and engagement in digital activities. Easy access to mobile devices, reliable internet connectivity, and the widespread popularity of multiplayer games contribute to frequent gaming, thereby normalizing it as a habitual behavior. Although male students demonstrate higher involvement, the rise in female participation suggests a trend toward more widespread engagement. According to the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, these patterns suggest that gaming functions not only as a recreational activity but also as a response to social and emotional demands shaped by environmental and interpersonal influences. Cognitive Behavioral Theory further explains

that repeated engagement in gaming is reinforced over time through learned behaviors and perceived rewards. Together, these factors foster an environment that elevates the risk of problematic gaming, influenced by accessibility, peer dynamics, and developmental characteristics.

2. The findings indicate that students' online gaming is currently in a transitional phase, remaining largely manageable but gradually advancing toward problematic use. Gaming has emerged as a consistent coping mechanism, with initial signs of tolerance, relapse, and challenges in self-regulation becoming apparent. According to the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, this pattern suggests that students are increasingly adopting gaming as an emotion-focused strategy to manage stress. Concurrently, Cognitive Behavioral Theory accounts for how repeated gaming behavior is reinforced by perceived emotional relief, thereby strengthening habitual use over time. While conflict remains minimal at this stage, the emergence of early negative effects signals a shift toward maladaptive coping, which may develop into more severe addiction and functional impairment if not addressed promptly.

3. The findings indicate that online gaming operates as a double-edged behavior. Although it may initially function as a coping mechanism, excessive engagement is associated with increased anxiety. The observed strong relationship suggests that higher levels of gaming correlate with greater psychological distress and diminished emotional regulation, signifying a transition from adaptive to maladaptive coping. Within the framework of the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, these results imply that students increasingly utilize gaming as an emotion-focused strategy rather than addressing stressors directly. According to Cognitive Behavioral Theory, repeated reliance on gaming reinforces behavioral patterns that provide temporary relief but may exacerbate anxiety over time. This pattern underscores the importance of early intervention to encourage healthier coping strategies and balanced gaming practices.

4. The findings demonstrate that as the severity of online gaming increases, students' anxiety levels also rise. This trend suggests that gaming may shift from serving as an initial coping mechanism to becoming a source of psychological distress when used excessively. Such a pattern reflects maladaptive coping, in which reliance on gaming undermines self-regulation and exacerbates emotional difficulties. According to the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, this behavior indicates that students increasingly adopt gaming as an emotion-focused strategy rather than addressing stressors directly. From the perspective of Cognitive Behavioral Theory, repeated gaming is reinforced by temporary emotional relief, which may strengthen dependency and contribute to heightened anxiety over time. The strong association observed suggests that excessive gaming not only correlates with anxiety but may also contribute to its development, underscoring the importance of early intervention and the promotion of healthier coping strategies.

5. The findings reveal a progressive shift from adaptive to maladaptive gaming behavior. Initially, controlled gaming at low anxiety levels develops into emotional dependence,

academic disruption, and reduced self-control as anxiety increases. At higher anxiety levels, increased reliance on external regulation indicates impaired self-regulation and diminished internal control. Grounded in the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, this pattern reflects a transition from adaptive coping to maladaptive, emotion-focused reliance on gaming in response to stress. According to Cognitive Behavioral Theory, repeated engagement in gaming reinforces learned behaviors that provide temporary relief, ultimately resulting in dependency and further weakening self-regulation. These results suggest that although gaming may initially serve as a functional coping strategy, it can evolve into a source of dysfunction, highlighting the importance of early and targeted interventions to foster self-regulation and healthier coping mechanisms.

6. The findings indicate that the proposed program constitutes a necessary and contextually responsive intervention that addresses both behavioral and psychological factors contributing to excessive gaming. Utilizing gaming as an avoidance coping strategy reveals deficiencies in students' emotional regulation and coping skills, which may result in maladaptive behaviors if not addressed. Grounded in the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, the program seeks to reduce reliance on emotion-focused coping by fostering more adaptive stress management strategies. Informed by Cognitive Behavioral Theory, the program develops cognitive and behavioral skills to help students restructure thought patterns and regulate responses, rather than solely focusing on reducing gaming behavior.

Additionally, the lack of a licensed guidance counselor underscores the necessity for a structured, teacher-facilitated approach to ensure both feasibility and sustainability within the school environment. Overall, the program functions as a preventive and developmental intervention designed to strengthen self-regulation, encourage healthier coping strategies, and mitigate the risk of gaming-related anxiety among students.

Recommendations

In light of the conclusions drawn from the study, the following are hereby recommended to the identified stakeholders to foster healthier gaming habits and promote student mental wellness at Igpit National High School and the broader community:

1. To the Guidance Counselors (Implementation of MGWP):

It is recommended that the Igpit National High School Guidance Office implement structured intervention programs, such as the Digital Dialogue Workshop under the Management Guidance Work Plan, to promote healthy gaming habits and adaptive coping strategies among students. The school may integrate digital literacy and self-regulation skills into its guidance activities, while actively involving parents in monitoring students' gaming behavior at home. Additionally, peer-based interventions within the Igpit school community can be utilized to positively influence students' gaming practices. Future programs should focus on helping learners balance gaming with their academic and social responsibilities to support their overall well-being.

2. To the Teachers (Integrating Digital Wellness):

It is recommended that teachers of Igpit National High School actively support interventions addressing students' problematic gaming behaviors by integrating guidance-related strategies into their classroom practices. Teachers may incorporate brief discussions on responsible gaming, time management, and self-regulation during homeroom or subject integration. They should also observe and identify students who show signs of excessive gaming, such as decreased academic performance or lack of focus, and refer them to the Guidance Office when necessary. Additionally, teachers can collaborate with parents and guidance personnel to reinforce healthy digital habits and encourage balanced routines among students. Through consistent classroom support, teachers play a vital role in helping students develop adaptive coping strategies and maintain overall well-being.

3. To the Parents (Fostering Digital Partnership):

It is recommended that parents of Igpit National High School students take an active role in supporting their children's emotional well-being and regulating gaming habits at home. Parents should establish clear and consistent guidelines on screen time, encourage balanced daily routines, and promote open communication so that children feel comfortable sharing their concerns and stress. Monitoring gaming behavior and recognizing early signs of anxiety—such as excessive worry, difficulty focusing, or irritability—can help in providing timely support. Additionally, parents are encouraged to collaborate with teachers and the school guidance office to ensure a consistent approach in managing students' gaming and emotional needs. By fostering a supportive home environment, parents can help their children develop healthier coping strategies and maintain overall well-being.

4. To the School Administrators (Systemic Support):

It is recommended that the school administrators of Igpit National High School strengthen institutional support systems by integrating comprehensive and school-wide interventions that address both online gaming behaviors and students' mental health. Administrators should support the implementation of the Management Guidance Work Plan (MGWP), particularly the Digital Dialogue Workshop Program, and allocate resources for regular guidance activities, counseling services, and teacher training. Policies promoting responsible digital use and balanced student lifestyles should be reinforced across the school. Additionally, administrators are encouraged to foster collaboration among teachers, guidance personnel, and parents to ensure a unified approach in monitoring and supporting students. By prioritizing both behavioral and emotional interventions, the school can effectively prevent the escalation of gaming-related problems and promote holistic student well-being.

5. To all Stakeholders

It is recommended that the Guidance Office of Igpit National High School implement structured interventions, such as Digital Dialogue Workshops, to enhance students' emotional regulation and coping strategies. Teachers should incorporate stress management and responsible gaming into classroom activities. Parents are encouraged

to provide supportive monitoring to foster students' self-regulation. Students are advised to practice effective time management and adopt healthier coping strategies.

6. To Future Researchers (Advancing Localized Research):

Future research should evaluate and refine the Digital Dialogue Workshops Program (MGWP) in diverse contexts. Longitudinal or experimental designs may be employed to assess its effects on anxiety, coping, and gaming behaviors, as well as to examine related factors such as academic performance, peer influence, and family dynamics. Ongoing adaptation and evaluation will contribute to the development of evidence-based guidance practices that support student well-being.

REFERENCES

- Ahmad, R., & Al-Zoubi, M. (2022). Online gaming addiction and its relationship with anxiety among adolescents. *International Journal of Adolescent Mental Health*, 34(2), 145–156.
- Beck, Aaron T.. (1976). *Cognitive therapy and the emotional disorders*. International Universities Press.
- Bediou, B., Adams, D. M., Mayer, R. E., Tipton, E., Green, C. S., & Bavelier, D. (2018). Meta-analysis of action video game impact on perceptual, attentional, and cognitive skills. *Psychological Bulletin*, 144(1), 77–110. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000130>
- Chen, X., Li, Y., & Zhang, H. (2025). Family support, resilience, and online gaming behavior among adolescents. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 28(1), 55–72.
- Kardefelt-Winther, D. (2024). Conceptualizing internet gaming as a coping strategy. *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*, 14, 100421.
- Kapoor, R., & Subida, M. (2023). Online gaming trends and digital engagement among Filipino adolescents. *Philippine Journal of Psychology*, 56(2), 101–118.
- Lazarus, Richard S., & Folkman, Susan. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. Springer Publishing Company.
- Li, X., Wang, Y., & Zhao, L. (2021). Excessive online gaming and anxiety symptoms among adolescents: A cross-sectional study. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 126, 106012. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2021.106012>
- Palay, J., & Arboleda, M. (2023). Online gaming and anxiety among senior high school students in the Philippines. *Philippine Social Science Journal*, 6(1), 44–58.
- Perez, J., Santos, M., & Cruz, R. (2024). Digital gaming culture among Filipino youth: Behavioral patterns and psychosocial implications. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 49(3), 25–39.
- Srivastava, P., & Singh, A. (2025). Emotional dysregulation and problematic online gaming among adolescents. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, 14(1), 88–102.
- Stockdale, L., & Coyne, S. M. (2024). Problematic gaming as maladaptive coping among adolescents. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 27(2), 95–103.
- Wang, J., & Chen, Y. (2021). Online gaming as emotion-focused coping among adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*, 89, 12–21. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2021.04.005>
- Wang, Y., Liu, Z., & Chen, H. (2025). Self-regulation and adaptive coping in adolescent gaming behavior. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 155, 108179.
- Zhou, Q., Lin, H., & Xu, F. (2023). Avoidance coping and problematic online gaming among secondary school students. *Addictive Behaviors Reports*, 18, 100512.