

## How Prevalent Is the Computer Games Addiction Among the Secondary and High School Children of Turkish Community in Erbil: A Case Study?

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**Abstract:** Addiction manifests itself in many different ways in people. These are behavioral addictions as well as substance addictions. Computer games addiction, which is an example of behavioral addiction, has emerged as an important problem with the development of technology in the modern age. This problem has personal and social reasons. It tends to occur especially in secondary school and high school age children. In this context, this research on children revealed the levels of game addiction. The reasons why the game addiction levels of the children studied were lower than those shown in the literature were investigated by referring to the opinions of the students' parents.

**Keywords:** Addiction, Computer Games Addiction, Causes of Addiction, Consequences of Addiction

### 1. Introduction

Computer games addiction has reached threatening dimensions especially for young individuals in the modern world. Modern research shows that, on average, 15 percent of young people have internet or gaming addiction. However, it is necessary to calculate that this problem may arise differently in different social groups. For this reason, in this study, a special social group was selected, and research was conducted on them, and the results were evaluated.

There are many different reasons for computer games addiction. As a result of eliminating these reasons and paying due attention to the issue, different results may emerge. Especially the control of the family and directing the children to other activities can play an active role in this regard. This study deals with this aspect of the issue.

### 2. Literature Review

#### 2.1 Addiction

Addiction is a Latin originated word, and it means dedicate oneself to something. Addiction is a complex phenomenon because it has several dimensions (Cree, 2018). People get addicted to different things under

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the effect of many causes. It has behavioral dimension in which people cannot do without performing certain behaviors.

It also has some social aspects in which people learn and perform what emerges as addiction in social contexts with the encouragement of others. Lastly, it also has biological aspect in which a person exhibits some behaviors like smoking because their body is in extreme need of that (Wanigaratne, 2006).

Some behaviors that people tend to be happier and enjoy more sometimes cause addiction in them. At the same time, it has been observed that people turn to addictive substances in order to be more productive. In particular, substance addiction causes changes in the endocrine system of people and causes some neurological consequences in case of excessive use (Koob & Le Moal, 2001). In this case, many mental and physical problems arise in people. At the same time, people's social life is seriously affected by this problem (Kirmayer et al., 2003).

There is a reward for everything that causes addiction. Therefore, addictive behaviors or substances give great pleasure. Thus, people accustomed to receiving the resultant reward are in need of repeating the same behavior over and over. Then a strong need arises that will require the same behavior again (Robinson et al., 2015).

## **2.2 Computer Games Addiction**

There are different types of addiction. Among them, one of the most common in the modern world is computer games addiction. Especially in the modern age, where computer technologies have developed so much, this type of addiction threatens young individuals. This type of addiction also manifests itself as technology addiction or internet addiction. It should also be noted that this is a type of behavioral addiction (Krishnamurthy & Chetlapalli, 2015).

As with all types of addiction, some physical and psychological symptoms occur. For example, people's constantly thinking about the game when they are not playing, being happy when playing, experiencing a mood change and being satisfied at the end of the game are the indicators of this addiction (Van Rooij & Prause, 2014).

Game addiction is called impulse control disorder in the literature. There are a number of symptoms that show that game addiction exists in a person. First of all, the person playing the game cannot control the time and does not quit the game whenever he wants. In addition, these people are indifferent to other activities and mostly want to spend their time playing games. One of the very important symptoms of addiction is that if the person does not have the opportunity to play when he needs to play, he enters into a sense of psychological deprivation (Turel & Serenko, 2012). In addition, people with game addiction often spend more time than they calculate at the beginning of the game (Lemmens et al., 2009).

There are some components that cause computer games addiction. Due to these dimensions in the content of the games, serious addictions arise in the players. We can express these contents as follows:

Success component:

As those who play the game gain success and level up, their desire to play increases. In this case, the player receives a promotion and is incentivized for his progress.

In addition, it is a very important encouraging factor for the player to want to learn the content of the game and to think that he will be more successful as he learns. Furthermore, the player's competition with others and the constant encounter with a challenge during the game increases the interest in the game and causes addiction over time.

#### Social Component:

The fact that the player has the opportunity to socialize with others in the game he plays and to be in constant communication is an important factor that leads to addiction. In addition, sometimes playing together in a group and achieving success together greatly increases the interest in games.

#### Immersion component:

The fact that the player does not know what is in the next step and discovers it while playing causes him to be completely immersed into the game. In addition, sharing roles with others and achieving success together draws players completely into the Game. Moreover, the customization and control mechanism, which occurs in the form of the player choosing a character for himself and designing it according to himself, encourages game addiction (Yee, 2006).

### **2.3 Factors Causing Computer Games Addiction**

One of the leading causes of computer games addiction in the modern world is that almost all of the young people can access a computer to play games. In addition, the development of computer technologies has made computer games more attractive. The fact that the computer has become an ordinary technological tool in human life can sometimes hide problems such as addiction or the processes that lead to addiction. Being busy with the computer, which is now an ordinary part of everyone's life, arouses a feeling as if it is ordinary. However, especially young individuals develop serious addiction over time. It is seen that computer games addiction is very effective especially in the 15-30 age group. Looking at the distribution within the population, approximately 15 percent of people have game addiction (Wittek et al., 2016). There are several major factors causing computer games addiction other than the most outstanding one mentioned above.

### **2.4 Demographic Factors**

The effects of some demographic factors are seen in game addiction. For example, male people's game addiction is more common than females. Likewise, this addiction is more common in people aged 16-21. In addition, game addiction is higher in people with less physical activity (Mentzoni et al., 2011).

### **2.5 Psychological Factors**

Some psychological factors have serious effects on game addiction. People who do not have satisfactory achievements in daily life are more prone to game addiction. Also, gaming addiction tends to be more

common in people with low self-esteem (Kneer et al., 2014). Some people resort to playing games to overcome psychological problems such as depression and stress, and this situation turns into addiction over time. The tendency to game addiction is increasing in people who are introverted and have weak social aspects (Obeid et al., 2019).

## **2.6 Family**

Family has multiple effects on game addiction. First of all, game addiction is a process and the people who will prevent someone from advancing in this process are primarily in the family. The fact that the family does not care about the ongoing process is an important reason for the emergence of this problem. In addition, neglected children in the family are more prone to game addiction. In some families, excessive control over the child and isolation from social life may occur in the form of game addiction (Kim et al., 2017). In addition, the parent's excessive use of technological devices in the family sets an example for children. Furthermore, problematic socioeconomic status and domestic violence are factors that lead children to game addiction (Bashir et al., 2021).

## **2.7 Adverse Effects of Computer Games Addiction**

Computer games addiction has many negative effects on people. First of all, this addiction causes physical problems and causes problems such as headache and back pain. It also emerges as an impediment for physical development, especially in young individuals, due to the lack of physical activity. Eyes are the organs most damaged by game addiction (Naser & Al-Bayed, 2016).

In addition, addiction to computer games causes psychological problems. First of all, because people are isolated from social life, socialization and social development problems arise. In addition, feelings of isolation and alienation from family and friends become dominant (Zdrilić & Kalajžić, 2022). Especially for young individuals, neglecting the most basic areas of responsibility such as school comes after game addiction. As a result, failure in lessons can threaten the future of many people (Ferguson, 2015).

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Model**

In this study, the children of the Turkish community living in the province of Erbil in the Iraqi Kurdistan region were used. Computer games addiction level of 29 students was tried to be revealed through a questionnaire. First of all, students were selected from 8-12 grades. The reason for this is that computer addiction is very high, especially in children at this age. After obtaining the results, evaluation was made with 5 of the parents of the students through interview model. Their evaluations were also included in the study. Thus, both children's addiction levels to computer games were determined and the reasons for the result were investigated.

### **3.2 Sampling**

This study was conducted on the children of the Turkish community living in Erbil. All parents of these children are teachers. A total of 29 students were surveyed. Afterwards, the evaluation of the obtained

results was made with the parents and the reasons for the results were investigated by referring to the parents' opinions. A total of 5 Parents participated in this interview.

### 3.3 Data Collection

The questionnaire applied to the students was used to obtain the data, and the computer games addiction levels of the children were determined in this questionnaire. In addition, the evaluation of the results obtained was made through interviews with parents.

## 4. Findings

These children spent the summer in which they found much time to play computer games. Even more, the temperature in Erbil during summertime is always over 40 degrees Celsius and even more, it is never possible to go out during daytime. It is only possible to go out after the sunset. During this time, they have the opportunity to play computer games, but there certainly are some other factors that affect their spending time on gaming, and we will see them step-by-step in this study.

The first thing we detected was their classes, so we asked a question about that. The result is as follows.

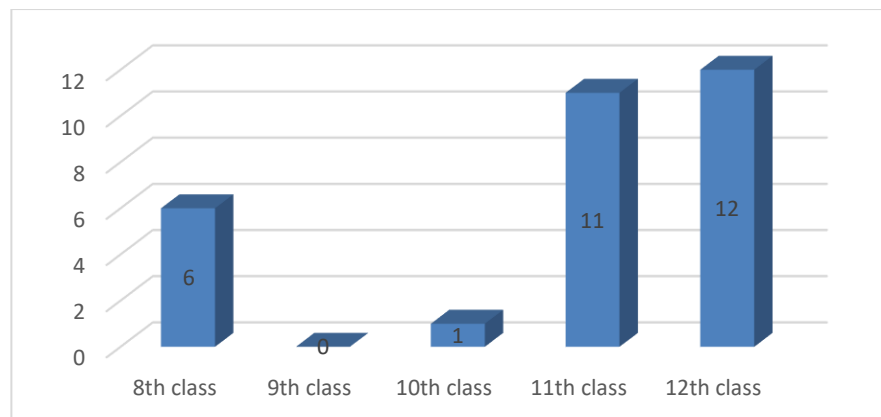


Figure 1: Your Class

There are 6 children attending class 8, one child attending class 10, 11 of them attending class 11 and 12 of them attending class 12. All of them are secondary and high school students because people generally get addicted around these ages.

The second point we inquired was if they had their own computers because it forms a strong effect to make them addicts.

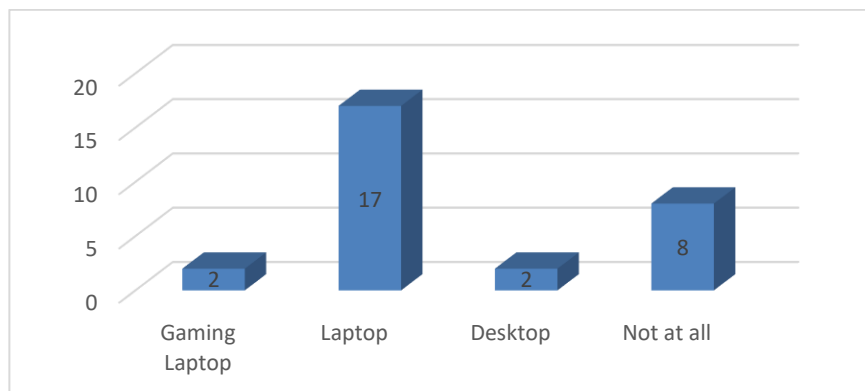


Figure 2: Do you have your own computer?

2 of them have gaming laptops, 17 of them have their own ordinary laptops, 2 of them have desktops, and 8 of them do not have any personal computers that belong only to themselves. In this case, 72% of them have their own computers, and it is a good reason for them to be computer game addicts, or at least, it is the first requirement to lead to addiction.

After that, we inquired how many hours a day they played computer games at home as it was stated above, they do not any other alternative than staying at home during hot summer.

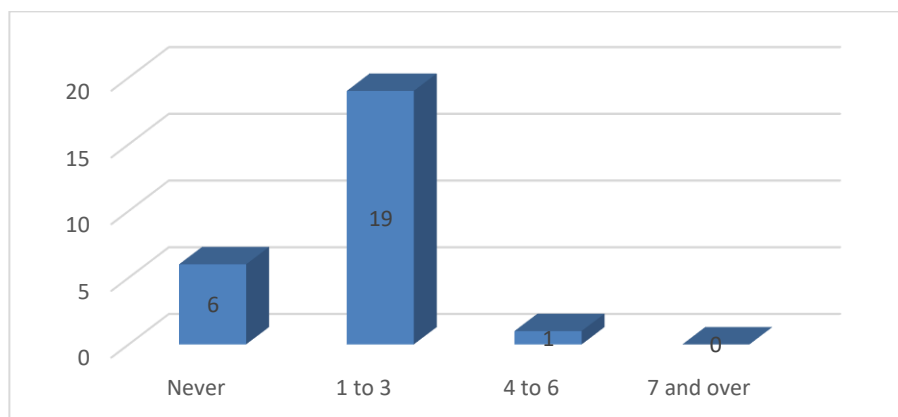


Figure 3: How many hours a day do you play computer games during the summer holiday?

6 of them (21%) state that they never play computer games. There are some good reasons behind it. Since some of them are 11th and 12th class students, they need to study for upcoming exams, and they may not have time to spend on computer games. As for others, 19 of them (66%) state that they play only 1 to 3 hours a day. Only one child plays between 4 to 6 hours, and there is nobody who plays games over 7 hours a day. From this statistic, it is possible to say that there is not any serious case among this population, but further questions may give some other results.

They have much time to play computer games during summer, but we also inquired about their spending time on computer games during schooltime and asked the next question.

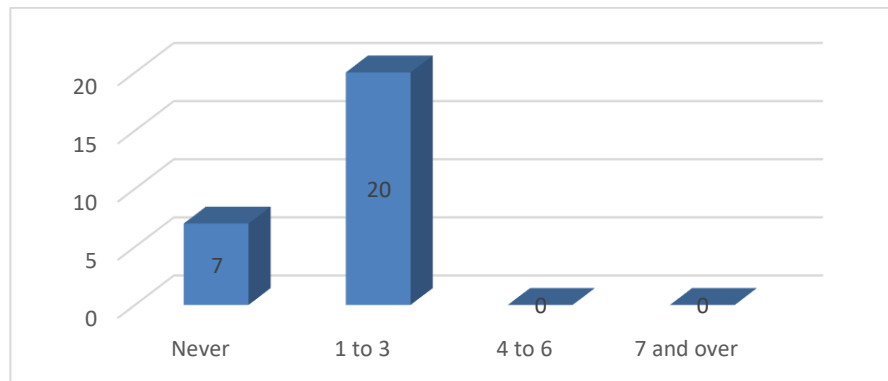


Figure 4: How many hours a day do you play computer games during school time?

It seems the figures fall down dramatically when they start school, most probably because of the reason that they have a workload from the school and do not find time to play more.

Although they answer in the way that they are not any addicts, the next question may reveal more than what they express above in the statistics. In the next question, we asked them how they define themselves as gamers, and their answers will reveal more than the ones above because if they think they are good gamers, then it will mean to us that they play computer games quite a lot.

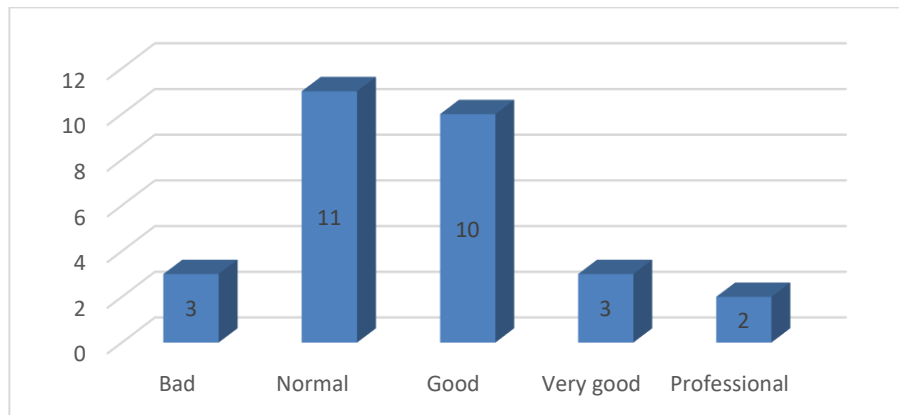


Figure 5: How do you define yourself as a gamer?

10 of them say that they are good gamers, and 3 of them very good gamers, and 2 of them professional gamers. So, 52% of them define themselves as above normal which requires some skills and spending quite much time on games. Although they answered that they spend little time on games, the figures here give us a different picture. We can conclude that they play games more than they expressed above. They may have concealed their real game playing time because they already realized from the questions that we were testing their addiction level of computer games, or maybe since they only answered for the previous summer, they did not consider other times.

The next question asked directly if they consider themselves as addicts. The previous question is implying that they may be game addicts, but this one openly asks it.

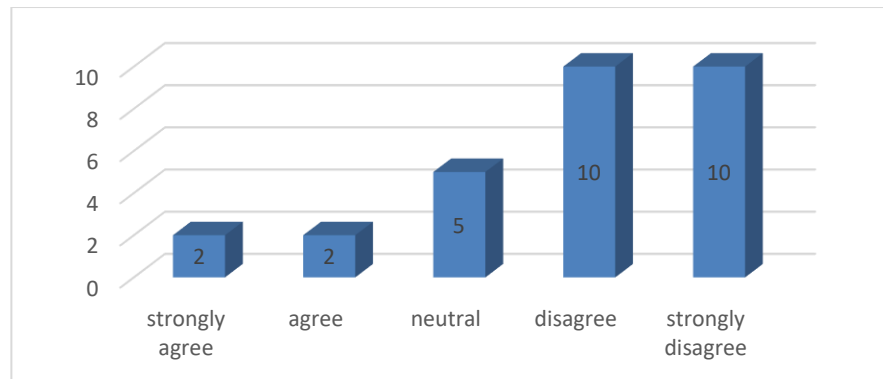


Figure 6: Do you think you are a game addict?

Only 4 of them (14%) think that they are game addicts, but majority of them say that they are good at computer games. 20 of them (69%) totally reject to this idea. Mostly, they do not accept to be game addicts. It is a normal inclination for humans to refuse to accept to have such negative traits, and it is apparently seen in this question, but the previous one implies that some of them may be spending more time on playing games.

The questions after this point have the potential to reveal their addiction to computer games because they are about the symptoms of addiction. As it was stated above in the literature review part, some behaviors obviously show addiction. The first symptom of addiction is that people feel much desire to play and even deprivation when they do not play, which is a perfect indicator of the problem.

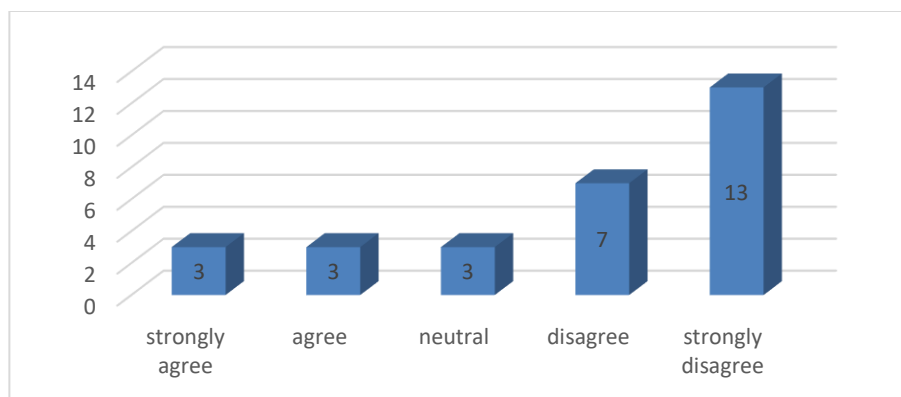


Figure 7: When you don't play any game in a day, do you feel the desire for it?

Only 6 of them (21%) say that they feel desire to play when they do not play these games during the day. 20 of them (69%) say that they do not feel any deprivation when they do not play. Normally this question shows the addiction level very clearly. In normal populations, around 15 to 20 % of them suffer from this



addiction, as it was stated above in the literature review. Here it also gives similar results. 21% of this population feels this deprivation and they may be serious case.

Another indicator of game addiction is that people cannot leave the game whenever they want, but they have strong desire to go on playing. To inquire about this point, we asked the next question.

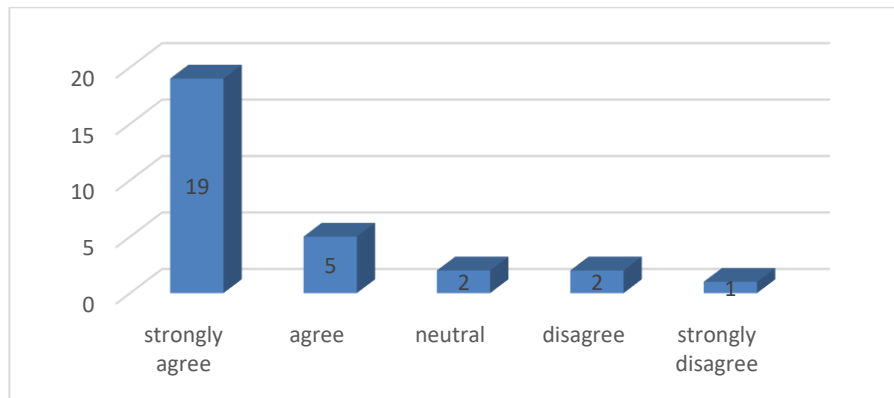


Figure 8: Do you think you can give up playing games at any time and leave your place?

Only 3 of them (10%) say that they cannot stop playing at any time. This is a strong indicator of game addiction, and the figure fell down to half in relation to the previous question which showed 6 people seemed addicts, or at least, the symptoms of addiction, and it fell down to 3 in this question.

Another indicator of addiction is that people get much pleasure while playing, so they get more and more addicted to games. To detect this point, we asked the next question.

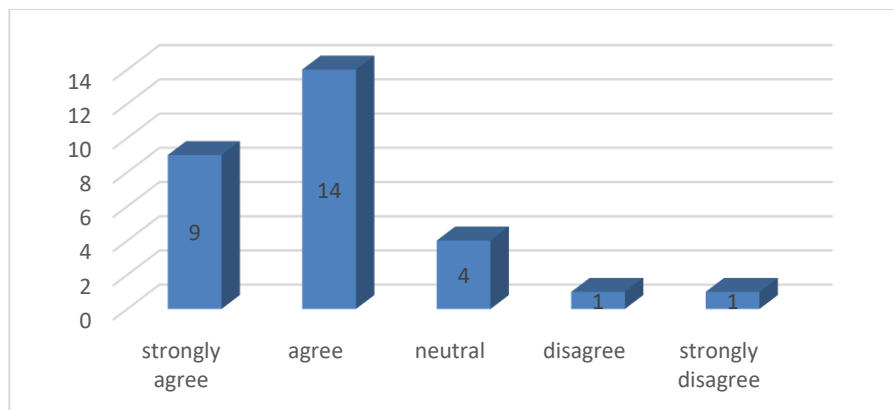


Figure 9: Do you feel the joy while you are playing?

23 of them (79%) say that they feel the joy when they play these games. Although this is an indicator of addiction, it does not mean much on its own because people already play games because they get the pleasure. This question may be meaningful when it is evaluated with others. When we look at other questions, they do not seem to be so much addicted to computer games.

Addicts show the behavior that when they lose, they try more to succeed until they get a desirable result. Even, they may still continue, but this behavior of trying many times is one of the indicators of addiction.

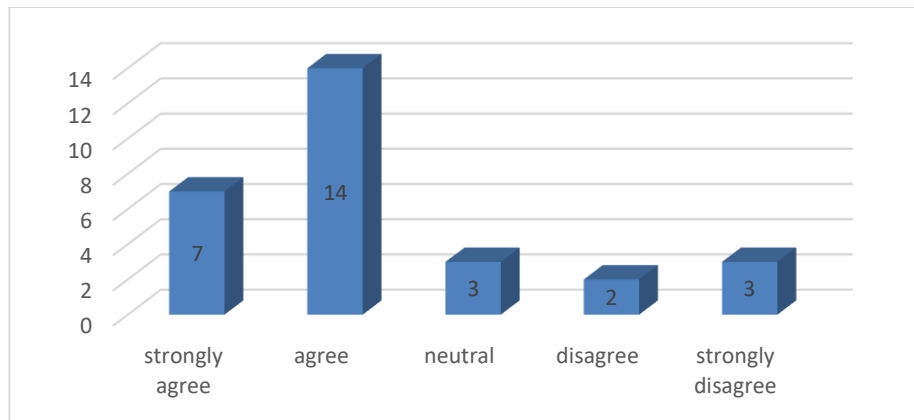


Figure 10: When you are not successful at reaching your goal in a game, do you feel the desire to play again?

21 people (72%) say that they feel the desire to play more when they lose the game. Again, this is not a clear indicator on its own, and it should be evaluated with others.

People also feel relief after playing game, and it could also be an indicator. For that reason, we asked the next question.

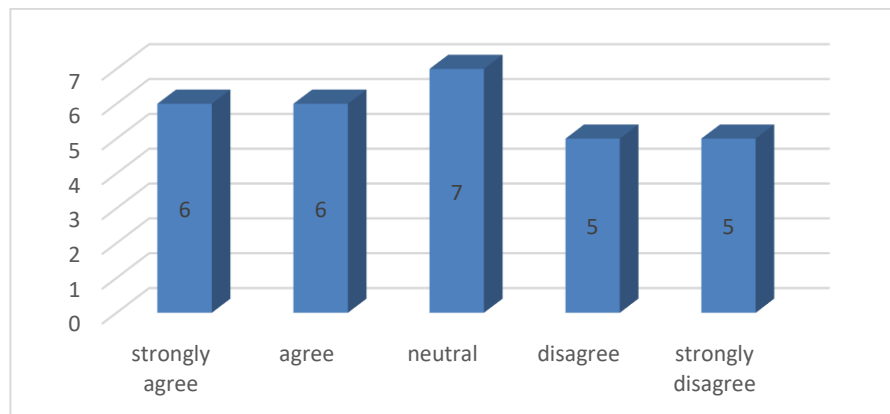
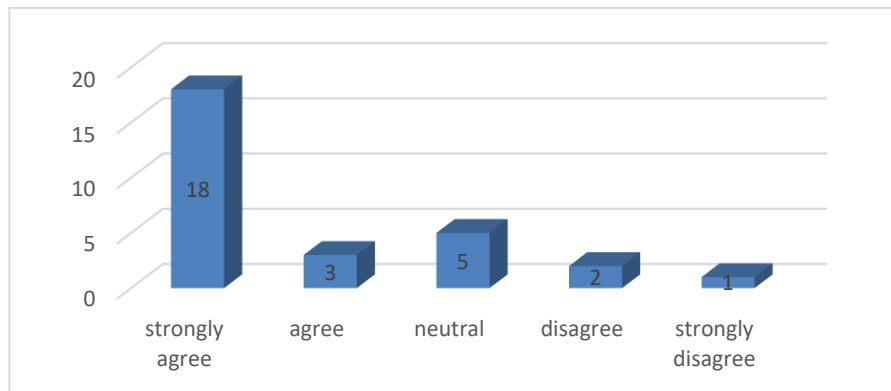


Figure 11: Do you feel relief after playing the game?

12 of them (41%) say that they feel relief after they play computer games. There are a lot of people who do not get any satisfaction after playing game.

In general, game addicts cannot think of a life without computer games. For that reason, we asked the next question to detect their attitude.



There are only 3 of them who cannot think of a life without games. This statistic is consistent with some of them above, and 3 people out of 29 seem to have this addiction, and it makes 10% of the whole population, and it is less than any average that is found in normal distributions in other studies.

Such addicts generally prefer playing computer games instead of any other activities with their friends and families. To detect their inclination, we asked the next question.

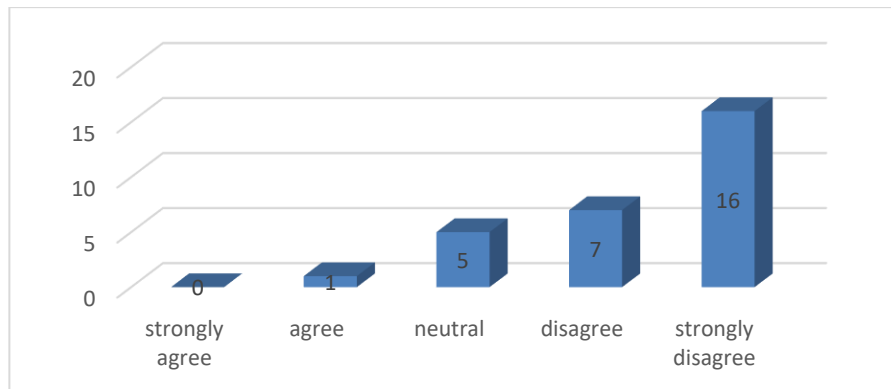


Figure 12: Do you prefer the game rather than doing an activity outside with the family?

Only 1 person agrees with this statement, so they mostly prefer family programs instead of playing computer games.

All in all, we can conclude that only 3 of them seem to be game addicts from the statistics, and this figure makes 10% of the whole population.

In our interview with the parents, we both got their opinions and evaluated these statistics. First of all, all of the parents said that they have control over their children's computer games playing. When children tend to play more than normal, they put some restrictions. They even had the children do different activities. When we showed the parents the average daily play time expressed by their children, they stated that this average was correct from their own perspective and that they did not allow their children more than 3 hours a day. It is seen that parents have a positive attitude towards their children's game addiction.

In other words, the parents stated that as a result of their own control and the attention of the children, there is no problem that can be considered as game addiction.

## 5. Discussion

It is seen that the addiction to computer games in these children we have studied is less than the normal distribution shown in the literature. In fact, the children having addiction do not play that much during school time. In this population, some reasons for the game addiction to be less than the normal distribution can be examined. First of all, the parents of all these children are teachers and they use certain control mechanisms over their children. Therefore, parent control can prevent this problem. In addition, since most of the children are in the last year of high school or 11th grade, the university exams waiting for them prevent them from game addiction. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that when people have other responsibilities, their susceptibility to game addiction decreases.

In fact, there is an important reason for gaming addiction in this population. The fact that the temperature is high enough to threaten human health in the summer time prevents any activity to be done outside. Therefore, people spend a significant part of their day at home. Despite this, computer games addiction was found to be quite low in these children.

In addition, it should be noted that the site where children live is quite large and suitable for many activities. In addition, the safety of this site allows children to do many activities together and outside, especially after the evening. For this reason, children devote a significant part of their time to outdoor activities after the evening. Since children can find the social environment, the risk of computer games addiction is reduced. Offering other activities for children greatly reduces game addiction.

## 6. Conclusion

There are some effective ways to free children from gaming addiction. First of all, the control of the parents over the children greatly reduces this dependency. In addition, the fact that children have other responsibilities is an important obstacle in front of addiction. Furthermore, it is understood that alternative activities to be offered to children have important functions in preventing addiction.

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