



RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES OF MUSLIM STUDENTS WHO ARE ADDICTED TO ONLINE GAMES IN RURAL AREAS IN COUNTRIES WITH A MUSLIM MAJORITY

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ABSTRACT

Internet gaming habits may influence teenagers' religious conduct. Gamers are able to survive without doing other activities by sitting for long periods. Many gamers who are hooked to online games are more concerned with the game than with their worship, causing them to get further from God. This study seeks to investigate the spiritual experiences of Yogyakarta students addicted to online games. This study employs a qualitative, phenomenological methodology. Data gathered from eight participants through snowball sampling underwent analysis using the Giorgi method. The study highlights diverse spiritual experiences among online game-addicted students, including parental and student indifference, shifts in activities, pupils' appreciation for spirituality, neglect of religious activities, and integration of internet games and worship for problem-solving. Excessive online gaming results from various factors, yielding varied spiritual experiences, enabling students to understand spirituality's significance and act as problem-solvers.

Keywords: online game addiction; spirituality; student

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INTRODUCTION

The development of technology is now increasingly sophisticated and has grown rapidly. One of the entertainments offered in today's technology products is online games. Online games have a positive as well as a negative impact on their users (Granic et al., 2014; Zamani et al., 2009). Online games can provide benefits as well as entertainment (Syahrani, 2015). Online games can also result in forgetting the time. Gamers are able to survive without doing other activities by sitting for long periods (Ridho, 2018). Teenagers, as well as youngsters and adults, enjoy playing online games. Early adolescence is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood (Ja'far, 2018). In the age group of 21 to 35 years, 26 percent of males and 21 percent of women play video games. While under 18 years, by 27 percent, and ages 18-35 years, by 29 percent, the end result is that 59 percent of people who play the game are men and 41 percent are women (Arsy, 2019a).

Students are at the developmental stage of late adolescence because they have the freedom to decide the daily activities, they engage in. Students in metropolitan regions are more susceptible to the risks of online gaming addiction. In addition, the majority of students reside in metropolitan regions where parental monitoring is limited. The family's function as a guide and supervisor is crucially important (Riski, 2017). Due to the great distance, this is tough for the family to accomplish, and it cannot be controlled. Teenagers have developed an addiction to internet games due to the emergence of entertainment media in the form of such games (Masya & Candra, 2016). The deterioration in adolescent achievement is caused by a lack of time to study as a result of a preoccupation with video games; the appearance of physical disease; the isolation caused by a lack of social interaction; and even the occurrence of criminal acts (Cahyo, 2019).

The evolution of internet gaming can also influence a teen's religious conduct (Braun et al., 2016). Many gamers who are hooked to online games are more concerned with the game than with their worship, causing them to get further from God. A teen must have a high spiritual level because spirituality is the foundation of human life, originating from a person's spirit and soul in carrying out tasks such as interacting with other people (Darmawan & Wardhaningsih, 2020). To increase teenagers' religiosity, religious ideals must be nurtured. The spirituality of adolescents is in severe need of parental guidance and aid because they are still in the stage of mental growth when they can be influenced by their religious judgment (Izza, 2019). A person's inability to effectively apply religious ideals will result in disobedience when it comes to doing worship, reciting the Qur'an, and participating in other religious activities in their environment. Increased spirituality results in greater obedience, both with regard to carrying out all of His mandates and avoiding all of His prohibitions.

Researchers observed the number of students who continued playing online games during prayer time and did not instantly fulfill their religious commitments. Given this context, academics are curious about the spiritual experiences of students who suffer from online game addiction. The objective of this research is to explore the religious and spiritual experiences of Muslim students who are afflicted with online gaming addiction.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach. There were eight participants who met the following inclusion criteria: Active undergraduate students at the Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta; Students addicted to online games; Playing online games for the last 6 months for a duration of more than 3 hours per day. Snowball sampling technique was used to determine the research respondents. Online game addiction screening in students using the Indonesian Online Game Addiction Questionnaire (Jap et al., 2013). The research location is in the Bantul district of the Special Region of Yogyakarta in March–April 2021. In-depth interviews were used to collect data based on a semi-structured interview guide, and field notes and voice recordings were recorded. The validity of qualitative research includes credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, obtained through triangulation, member check, peer debriefing, and bracketing. Analysis of the data using the Giorgi thematic analysis method. The research has passed the research ethics test from the Health Research Ethics Committee, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences UMY with letter number 047/EC-KEPK FKIK UMY/II/2021.

RESULTS

In-depth interviews were conducted directly on eight participants. All participants were students living in Yogyakarta and majoring in different fields: 1 participant majoring in

accounting, 5 participants in nursing, 1 participant in pharmacy, and 1 participant in law. All participants had online gaming addiction and had been playing online games for more than 6 months for longer than 3 hours per day. The thematic analysis showed three themes related to changes in daily activities, understanding of spirituality and the religious and spiritual values among students who had online gaming addiction.

Changes in students' daily activities

Changes in sleep and rest

Some participants explained that they experienced sleep disturbances and changes in sleep cycle. The following are the statements from students who experienced changes in sleep and rest.

"It was messed up. So, instead of at night, I sleep during the day." (P1, female)

"If I'm with friends, sometimes I don't realize it's already dawn, it's already 3 o'clock. Then I wake up very late at 11 hehe." (P2, male)

"My sleep schedule is messed up because I stay up all night and don't even sleep when I'm gaming." (P3, male)

Changes in eating habits

Nutritional and fluid intake among students became poor. It is evident from the participants' statements below.

"I once forgot to eat. I usually have lunch at 10 or 11. But, at that time I ate at 1 or 2 in the afternoon." (P1, female)

"I used to skip meals a lot. Drink a little too." (P6, male)

Changes in religious practices

All participants are Muslims who are obliged to pray five times a day. The following are the statements from some participants who had problems in performing salah (prayers) diligently, especially Maghrib and Isha prayers.

"Maghrib time is short, right? So, sometimes I pray at the end of its time. But, Isha time is a bit longer, so I usually pray at 12 at midnight." (P1, female)

"I forget to pray a few times, hehe. But, delaying prayer, I often do it haha." (P3, male)

"I often delay it. Very often. Except for Maghrib, because the time between Maghrib and Isha is short, I pray in a hurry." (P4, female)

"For prayers, I often delay them, especially Isha." (P5, male)

One participant did not neglect his prayers because he played online games in the evening. It is evident from his statements below.

"I don't have any problems with salah. I play games at night, so it doesn't not disrupt my salah." (P8, male)

Problems with physical health

Excessive online gaming resulted in physical problems among students, such as dizziness and aches in the body, the fingers and mostly the eyes:

"In terms of physical exhaustion, it's the eyes, really tired." (P1, female)

"I'm usually laying on my stomach when playing games, so my hands and my fingers hurt sometimes. And when playing games a bit too long, I get a bit dizzy, too." (P2, male)

"My eyes are sometimes swollen as I look at the screen for too long". (P3, male)

"Usually after 3 to 4 hours of playing games, I feel my eyes burning and my head dizzy." (P7, male)

"If I play games for a long time, my body aches." (P8, male)

Students' understanding of spirituality

Knowledge of spirituality

Participants' knowledge of spirituality varied. They said that spirituality is related to divinity, religion, perspective of life, efforts in the search for life and self-confidence. It is evident from the participants' statements below.

"Spiritual is our relationship with Allah SWT." (P1, female)

"Things related to religion, Miss. Our religion may not only be about worshiping, but also like recitations, and majlis, too." (P2, male)

"For me, spirituality is more about a person's soul in viewing everything that is related to religion." (P3, male)

"There are various kinds of spirituality, Miss. Like worshiping, praying, reciting the Qur'an, listening to murrotals, Miss." (P4, female)

"Anything Islamic. That has to do with religion." (P5, male)

"Anything related to spirituality. The belief that we have goes into spirituality." (P6, male)

"An attempt to find life. So that people believe in the existence of God." (P7, male)

"Spirituality is about personal beliefs coming from within ourselves." (P8, male)

Purposes of performing spiritual practices

Participants performed spiritual practices because they aimed to make their lives more focused, get closer to God and comply with religious obligations.

"To get closer to Allah. So that my life will be more focused." (P1, female)

"To make my life easier, Miss. Make it more focused." Because we have nothing to take with us when we are gone other than good deeds we accumulate as long as we live." (P2, male)

"Because spirituality is the guide for life, meaning that we have life guidance." (P3, male)

"I can get closer to Allah SWT." (P7, male)

"... to worship. My purpose is only to do what is obliged in my religion. Because it's compulsory, I must do it." (P8, male)

Benefits of spiritual practices

Some participants felt the benefits after performing spiritual practices. They felt more comfortable, felt closer to God, and had a calmer soul. It is evident from the participants' statements below.

"So that we can be calm, comfortable." (P1, female)

"I feel that when I get closer to Allah, it's like there's often good news coming, Miss. It's bringing me good luck, too." (P2, male)

"My heart is calmer. Moreover, I'm far away from my parents, so I can only pray to Allah and tell Him everything." (P3, male)

Students' religious and spiritual values

Students' religious and spiritual values indicated their self-awareness, religious formalities and behaviors in religious practices.

Students' self-awareness of religious and spiritual values

Participants realized the importance of religion for their lives and religious behavior is used as a form of problem-solving coping mechanism. The following are the participants' statements.

"I think it's important. Because that's our grip. Especially when we have depression or something. What's important is faith. At least we have a hand that can prevent us from taking the wrong path." (P1, female)

"I think religion is important. So, religion is our standard. If there is no standard, there is no direction. So, I think of it like a pole. I mean, if we don't hold it up, we will surely fall to the right or to the left." (P3, male)

"If there's a problem... I usually pray to confide in Allah, complaining about my problems that I have." (P1, female)

"If the problem is very serious, we can only pray and pray, Miss. Ask for forgiveness from Allah. Sometimes I also ask my friends for solutions." (P2, male)

Yes, I solve the problems. For example, if I have a health problem, or I am sick, I will become more religious. But, it's not always the case for other problems." (P8, male)

Students' religious formalities

The results of in-depth interviews showed that the participants performed various religious practices. Some participants performed *sunnah*. Students' religious environment also had an impact on their behavior.

"Nothing, hehe. Only obligatory prayers. Even I still miss them sometimes." (P1, female)

"Yes, according to the recommendations, Miss, like prayers, I usually recite Al Qur'an on Fridays. I also join majlis, miss, in the village and teach the children how to recite Al Qur'an." (P2, male)

"In addition to prayers, sometimes I recite Al Qur'an after Maghrib prayer. I also often do sunnah fast because my parents do it." (P5, male)

"For me, after I entered Muhammadiyah, I considered it for learning, not for contrasting. Even though the organization that I follow is different, I can take the good ones. Because both organizations teach good things. As long as it doesn't go against my organization, it's fine." (P3, male)

"I'm not surprised because I knew the risk when I entered Muhammadiyah. Like it or not, just follow the rules." (P4, female)

"I find it usual. Because it's not that different. The thing is, you know, in doing worship, I follow where I am." (P8, male)

Students' religious practices

Muslims have an obligation to perform daily prayers on time. Several participants stated that they sacrificed their *salah*, which is compulsory, for online games. They sometimes ignored the reminder to pray and continued to play online games, but some participants chose to pray, especially if it was their parents who reminded them.

"Yes, I continue to play the game instead of praying. I know I'm wrong, but I'm like I'll do it later because the game is still on, hehehe." (P2, male)

"I do not immediately go to pray. In fact, I continue to play, especially when I'm still in the middle of it." (P3, male)

"I'll continue playing. Especially if it's a war, you can't leave it, you have to finish it, hahaha." (P6, male)

"Yeah, sometimes I don't care, Miss. Because my focus is on the game, so if I'm asked to pray, I say 'Yes, later'. I'm more focused on the game than on my parents." (P2, male)

"I say yes. But, I don't move, hehehe." (P4, female)

"I'll do it right away, especially if it's my parents who remind me of it." (P7, male)

Students felt guilty and worried after missing prayers. It is evident from the participants' statements below.

"Very worried. Sometimes I feel guilty." (P1, female)

"Sometimes I feel guilty because I don't pray on time and I can't join the congregation at the mosque and instead I pray at home. Well, boys have to pray at the mosque, right?" (P2, male)

"I'm thinking of my sin, I feel I am really stupid because I miss prayers just because of playing a game." (P3, male)

"I feel sinful. But I'm like in the middle of it. Especially when it's the war, you can't just leave it or you'll lose, hehehe". (P4, female)

DISCUSSION

Changes in students' daily activities

The student stated that the amount of time spent playing online games resulted in irregular sleep patterns; lack of sleep hours was caused by the habit of playing late at night. Adolescents have a strong desire for social interaction, thus they frequently spend time at night playing online games only for social interaction (Surbakti, 2017). A person who often plays online games is susceptible to sleep difficulties. In this study, changes in physical health were attributed to excessive internet gaming. It caused sore eyes, disorientation, and unsteady fingers. Online games are believed to have a negative effect on physical health. A person who spends too much time playing online games will have eye tiredness owing to radiation produced from the cellphone or computer screen, aching fingers, the formation of neurological illnesses, and a weakened immune system due to prolonged sitting. (Setiawati et al., 2018). Students who exhibit excessive engagement in gaming often struggle with regulating their emotions. Children report feeling easily angered, saddened, and irritated when their parents abruptly halt their online gaming activities (Mukhtar et al., 2022). Engaging in religious activities has a notable influence on both the quality of life and cognitive function of individuals (Amir et al., 2022).

Attempts to regulate playing were unsuccessful. The inability to manage one's gaming activities despite the intention to reduce the amount of playing time or simply cease playing is a defining characteristic of Internet gaming disorder (Chen & Oliffe, 2018). According to another study, the majority of online game addicts suffer from eating issues as a result of skipping meals (Jehangir, 2019). Smartphone and online gaming addictions are connected with eating disorder (Örnek & Gündoğmuş, 2022). Students from households with easy Internet access tended to spend more time playing online games ($p < 0.001$) and had a higher risk of eating disorder, particularly in men (Tetik et al., 2018).

Playing online games will interfere with a person's daily duties and may alter their priorities in completing tasks (Wang et al., 2019). Generally, a person prefers simple tasks over those that need more effort. A stronger belief in God was connected with less frequent gaming and lower scores on game addiction scales. Additionally, religion was associated with reduced online and offline gaming frequency (Braun et al., 2016). Spirituality prevents adolescents and young adults from becoming an addictions (Charzyńska et al., 2021). It can be inferred that the quality of belief in God among the majority of participants remains low.

Students' understanding of spirituality.

All participants responded that their conception of spirituality involved spirituality, divinity, religion, and faith in oneself. Spirituality is an experiential direction pertinent to humans (Novitasari et al., 2017). Spirituality is something that stimulates and enlightens you to something greater than yourself in life (Barber & Wilson, 2015). Spirituality is particularly

concerned with the value of life. There is a connection between spirituality and the soul in one's life. Spirituality is the capacity to comprehend the meaning and function of life. The meaning of life is a human need to achieve objectives, continue living, and become better people (Utami & Setiawati, 2019). The majority of respondents claimed that they worshipped in an effort to grow closer to their God and achieve tranquility. Some people perceive the benefits of religious spiritual activities, including calmness, a stronger relationship with God, and good fortune. Spirituality and life satisfaction are positively and significantly correlated (Carranza Esteban et al., 2021). There is a substantial and constant correlation between positive mental health and higher scores on all spiritual health dimensions (Michaelson et al., 2019). It has been discovered that a higher degree of religion and personal faith contributes directly to better health (Papaleontiou - Louca, 2021). The idea of spirituality grounded in Tawhid provides a remedy for the uneasiness, void, and powerlessness experienced by contemporary individuals when confronted with life's challenges (Ihsan et al., 2022).

Students' religious and spiritual values

Some of the participants recognized the significance of religious spirituality as a life guide and as a coping technique for resolving life challenges, such as depression or other health issues. Specific religious coping activities may include: praying to God to change a bad situation or asking for emotional strength (Rosmarin et al., 2016). Some students have not properly interpreted religious teachings despite residing in a religious social setting on campus. This inhibits the optimal growth of their religious spirituality. According to the statements of students who merely practice sunnah/additional worship, it is only necessary to adhere to environmental regulations in order to avoid creating difficulties. In fact, if social relationships with religious communities are profoundly interpreted, they can prevent harmful behavior in youth, such as online gaming addiction (Cotton et al., 2006). Eighty percent of teenagers in Asia believe in God, but fewer than forty percent consider faith to be a very significant aspect of life (Burg et al., 2011). High religiosity is associated with negative attitudes towards addiction (Grant Weinandy & Grubbs, 2021).

Excessive online gaming might result in maladaptive behavior, which is conduct that is inconsistent with the surrounding environment (Gunawan, 2018). One of the characteristics of those who are addicted to online games is that they are willing to neglect more important responsibilities in order to play online games (Umam & Muhid, 2020). Students' neglect manifests itself by their tardiness or, on occasions, by their absence from worship altogether. Worship is a means of drawing nearer to God (Reza, 2015). Individuals with a strong religious identity will influence the low prevalence of online gaming addiction. In addition, religious identification has a positive influence on self-control ($R = 0.623$, $r = 0.623$, $t = 12.976$, $p = .000$); hence, those with a strong religious identity will also have a strong self-control (Arsy, 2019b). Spirituality is intimately associated with religion and might be a protective factor against mental diseases including suicide and substance abuse (Barber & Wilson, 2015). One participant stated that if his parents told him to pray while he was playing a video game, he would quickly comply. Parental influence has a far greater impact on religious than political or other social behaviour (Paloutzian & Park, 2005). Late adolescent coping is affected both directly and indirectly by religiosity and spirituality (Krok, 2015).

CONCLUSION

Addiction to online games has negative consequences for students, including sleep difficulties, eating disorders, the onset of various types of bodily ailments, and alterations in religious worship. The students have a sufficient comprehension of spirituality, but their application of religious spirituality to daily life is still weak. Students' apathy to daily worship

and their inability to manage the behavior of those playing online games are indications of this.

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