The International Journal of Indian Psychology
ISSN 2348-5396 (Online) | ISSN: 2349-3429 (Print)
Volume 13, Issue 2, April- June, 2025
DIP: 18.01.203.20251302, DOI: 10.25215/1302.203
https://www.ijip.in

Research Paper

A Study of Sensation Seeking and Aggressive Behaviour Among Online Gamers

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ABSTRACT

The study evaluated the relationship of online and offline gaming with adolescent sensation seeking and aggression. First, relating the activities of gaming engagement with sensation seeking and aggression was sought from the data. One hundred fifty online gamers, aged 13-18 years, were administered the Buss and Perry Aggression Questionnaire and the Brief Sensation Seeking Scale. A cross-sectional design was employed, and data were collected via self-administered questionnaires. One-way ANOVA was used for checking the level of aggression and sensation seeking concerning different levels of gaming engagement. Statistically significant differences in aggression were found, $F(35, 114) = 2.221$, $p = .001$, indicating that a high level of gaming engagement relates to high aggression. Also, the association found between gaming intensity and aggressive behavior is strong, $F(35, 114) = 439.280$, $p < .000$. The differences analyzed revealed sensation seeking, $F(2, 147) = 5.464$, $p = .005$, with higher sensation seeking linked with higher gaming activity. The findings suggest that adolescent highly engaged gamers manifest more aggression and sensation-seeking. The study highlights that these personality traits are crucial in understanding the context of online gaming and their probable impact on mental health issues. Preventive and therapeutic interventions are sought for dealing with the negative triage of behavior associated with excessive playing games on the emotional and psychological growth of an adolescent.

Keywords: *Online Gaming, Aggression, Sensation Seeking*

Today is the age of information technology where people can connect, share and communicate each other from any corner of the world with the help of the system called internet. The internet was not that much visible to general public by 1990s, but today by 2020s there is the estimation of more than the half of the world's population has access to the internet. Today there are number of social networking applications, platforms, games, which have created Jennie; the virtual world, seems as powerful as the real world. People are connecting each other, sharing live updates, experiences, knowledge, as well as entertaining too. The internet world off course has made life easier but it is engaging people more than the usual time on the name of knowledge, entertaining, and sharing. By reaching excess use of internet people are coming to the level of behavioral addiction. Behavioral

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Received: May 09, 2025; Revision Received: May 22, 2025; Accepted: May 25, 2025

addiction includes gambling, love, shopping, sex, work exercise and internet use. Gaming addiction is one of them; Gaming disorder also defined as Internet gaming disorder includes repetitive thoughts and compulsive use of online games to play despite knowing its negative effects or facing it negative consequences. According to DSM-5, (2013) and ICD-11, (2018) Gaming Disorder (GD) is defined as a pattern of repetitive or persistent gaming behavior.

The use of internet from adaptive level to pathological level, has been described with different terms; Internet addiction disorder, Problematic internet use, excessive internet use etc (Shaw & Black 2008). Along with the positive impacts of internet use like improved communication, knowledge, connection, growth in business, and relationship engagements, the excessive use is bringing problems to physical, mental and social domains of the health.

The research done by Zamani et al. (2009) aimed to investigate the effects of addiction to computer games on physical and mental health of students. The result of the study shows that addiction to computer games effects various dimensions of health and increase physical problems, anxiety and depression, while decrease social functioning disorder. Shambare, Rugimbana, & Zhowa, (2012) conducted the study on mobile phone addiction and said it possibly the biggest non-drug addiction of 21st century. Another research done by Kuss (2017) examined Smartphone addiction among students, aimed to investigate the Smartphone addiction as a prediction of interpersonal relationship and loneliness in university students. Results indicate that Smartphone addiction was negatively correlated with interpersonal relationship and positively correlated with loneliness in university students. The finding also shows that women have a higher level of Smartphone addiction than man.

Gezgin (2017) conducted a study to examine the supposed effects of the duration of mobile internet ownership, the duration of daily mobile internet use and monthly mobile internet quota variables on the level of homophobia among university students. According to the result of multiple regression analysis, variables such as duration of mobile internet ownership in terms of years, duration of daily mobile internet use and G.S.M. mobile internet quota were found strong predictors of homophobia prevalence in university students.

Recent research has also explored the potential positive effects of online gaming. Li et al. (2023) conducted a qualitative study with 20 undergraduate students from six universities to examine how online gaming addresses psychological needs and supports individual growth. The findings revealed three key benefits: satisfying the need for personal growth, fulfilling social life requirements, and enhancing academic performance. These results highlight that, when used responsibly, online games can serve as tools for personal and social development. The study emphasizes the role of educators and families in guiding students toward balanced and responsible gaming practices, ensuring that the benefits of gaming are maximized while minimizing potential risks.

A study done by Sueki (2013) investigated the effects of suicide – related internet use on users' suicidal thoughts, predisposition to depression, anxiety and loneliness. The study concluded that suicide – related internet use adversely affected the mental health even the positive content that was related to decline the suicidal tendency or thought was found of no use in decreasing suicidal thoughts.

Sensation Seeking and Its Impact on Online Gaming Addiction: An Overview

Sensation seeking is a well-documented personality trait characterized by the tendency to pursue novel, varied, and highly stimulating activities or experiences. Individuals high in

sensation seeking are often drawn to the unknown, engaging in behaviors that provide excitement and unpredictability. Examples of such behaviors include participating in extreme sports, exploring diverse cuisines and music, frequent travel, seeking new sexual experiences, and challenging established viewpoints. This inherent drive for stimulation has been linked to both adaptive and maladaptive outcomes, depending on the context.

In the realm of digital interaction, sensation seeking plays a significant role in online gaming behavior, particularly among adolescents. A study conducted by Hu (2017) delved into the mechanisms underlying this relationship, identifying both mediating and moderating factors. The research explored how *affective association with online games* acts as a mediator and how *impulsivity* moderates the influence of sensation seeking on online gaming addiction. The findings revealed that sensation seeking, positive emotional associations with online gaming, and impulsivity were all significantly and positively correlated with online gaming addiction. This suggests that adolescents with higher levels of sensation seeking and impulsivity, coupled with positive affective experiences from gaming, are at a greater risk of developing problematic gaming behaviors.

Research has further highlighted the role of personality traits in online gaming addiction. Mehroof & Griffiths, 2010 examined the relationship between traits such as sensation seeking, self-control, aggression, neuroticism, state anxiety, and trait anxiety in predicting online gaming addiction. Using multiple linear regression analysis, the study identified significant associations between five traits—neuroticism, sensation seeking, trait anxiety, state anxiety, and aggression—and online gaming addiction. These findings underscore the importance of personality traits in the acquisition, development, and persistence of gaming addiction. However, the study also emphasized the need for further research to replicate and expand upon these findings, particularly to better understand how these traits interact and contribute to addictive behaviors in diverse populations.

The current research builds on these insights to further investigate the intricate interplay of personality traits, emotional associations, and behavioral tendencies in the context of online gaming addiction. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for designing targeted interventions aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of excessive gaming among adolescents.

Aggression among Youth

Aggression remains a pressing concern in contemporary societies due to its profound impact on individuals and communities. Youth aggression, in particular, is a significant social issue, contributing to escalating rates of violence and crime that disrupt societal harmony. In recent years, increasing attention has been directed toward understanding the underlying causes of youth aggression, fueled by a perceived rise in violent behaviors among young individuals.

Rao (2016) conducted a comprehensive study to examine the prevalence of aggression among youth and identify associated risk factors. The findings revealed that males scored significantly higher on measures of aggression compared to females. The study also highlighted various risk factors contributing to youth aggression, including adverse childhood experiences such as physical abuse, substance use (e.g., alcohol and tobacco), negative peer influences, family violence, and academic disturbances. Additional psychological and emotional factors, such as loneliness, mood disturbances, attention issues, and heightened suspicion, were also identified as significant contributors. Furthermore, media exposure and negative childhood experiences emerged as influential factors shaping aggressive tendencies.

Bullying and youth violence are significant public health and educational challenges globally. According to UNESCO, nearly one-third of students face bullying annually, while around 246 million children endure physical violence and bullying in schools. These behaviors are forms of aggression, which has seen a rising prevalence in recent years (UNESCO, 2019). Previous research has examined the causes of aggression from personal and environmental perspectives, including the role of virtual environments such as internet games (Cui et al., 2015; Robles-Haydar et al., 2021). Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD), with its prevalence increasing annually (Wallace, 2014; Shek & Yu, 2016). IGD is often associated with aggression, as individuals with poor interpersonal relationships and low self-efficacy may seek self-worth and validation through virtual gaming (Kim et al., 2008; Mehroof & Griffiths, 2010). Violent video games, in particular, may trigger hostility and aggression in real life (Anderson et al., 2010).

Conversely, some studies suggest weak or negative correlations between IGD and aggression. These findings align with the catharsis theory, which posits that gaming may help individuals relieve stress and reduce aggression (Ferguson & Olson, 2013). Moderate gaming has even been linked to better mental health outcomes compared to excessive gaming or abstention (Allahverdipour et al., 2010).

The inconsistent findings regarding the relationship between IGD and aggression may be due to variations in study designs, sample sizes, and measurement tools. This meta-analysis aims to consolidate empirical studies to clarify this relationship, considering potential moderators such as measurement tools, demographic variables (e.g., age, gender, region), and study year.

Statement of the problem

The increase in participation in online gaming offers completely new dimensions relating to adolescence and its potential impacts on mental health and social interactions. Adolescents in the developing stage are highly susceptible to the predisposition associated with gaming psychological and behavioral effects, basically characterized by impulsivity, risk-taking, and a thirst for discovery. Of particular note is the possible association of online gaming with sensation-seeking and aggression, which is an area of concern among researchers, educators, and mental health professionals.

Aggression among adolescents is a huge issue in society brought along with negative outcomes that range from conflicts between peers, academic challenges, and mental health problems. Sensation-seeking, a personality trait that involves searching for novel and exciting experiences may increase thrill-seeking and risk-taking behaviors that include compulsive game playing. Online gaming's often immersive and competitive nature can heighten these tendencies in ways that amplify a vicious cycle, exacerbating aggressive and sensation-seeking behaviors. Even as there have been some studies indicating positive aggression-often with dissimilar conclusions and a fairly basic causal effect in the role of sensation-seeking-there would be a stronger case for investigation. Such by those that provide levels of gaming engagement, game type, and levels of aggression by personality traits may set up a moderation on this relationship. It will be very informative to understand the interplay between aggression, sensation-seeking, and gaming in pinpointing adolescents at risk and helping to advocate various interventions directed at this group.

This study aims to address these gaps by examining the relationship between online gaming, sensation-seeking, and aggression among adolescent gamers, with a focus on the mental health implications and the need for preventive and therapeutic strategies.

Objectives

1. To examine whether there is a significant difference in sensation-seeking behavior among online gamers.
2. To investigate whether there is a significant difference in aggressive behavior among online gamers.
3. To explore the differences in sensation-seeking behavior among online gamers categorized into low, medium, and high sensation seekers.
4. To analyze the differences in aggressive behavior among online gamers categorized into low, medium, and high levels of aggression.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kayaalti (2018) explored the impact of online games on vocabulary learning, finding that while they can be more effective than traditional methods, gender differences exist. Male students tend to benefit more from online gaming for vocabulary acquisition than female students.

Online Gaming Addiction

Rios et al. (2022) conducted a systematic review to identify trends and gaps in research on online gaming addiction. They highlighted the need for further investigation into the factors contributing to addiction and the development of effective intervention strategies.

Kaya et al. (2023) examined the relationship between basic psychological needs, online gaming addiction, responsibility, and meaning in life. They found that responsibility and meaning in life mediate the relationship between basic psychological needs and online gaming addiction.

Rajathi & Ravisankar (2022) investigated the impact of online gaming addiction on academic performance. They found that excessive gaming can lead to negative consequences such as physical health issues, sleep disturbances, and attention problems.

Zhao et al. (2021) explored the correlation between online gaming behaviors, anxiety, depression, and executive function in college students. They found that moderate gaming can have positive effects, while excessive gaming can negatively impact mental health and cognitive function.

Valdez et al. (2020) and Islam et al. (2020) investigated the impact of online gaming on academic performance and mental health. Both studies found that excessive gaming can have negative consequences, but moderate gaming can be beneficial.

Online Gaming, Sensation Seeking, and Aggression

Batmaz & Celik (2021) and Hijazifar & Livarjani (2021) investigated the relationship between sensation seeking, online gaming addiction, and loneliness. They found that sensation seeking and loneliness are positively correlated with online gaming addiction.

Przybylski and Weinstein (2019) and Mehroof & Griffiths (2010) examined the relationship between violent video games and aggression. While some studies have suggested a link, others have found mixed results.

Bogacheva & Alekseeva (2021) examined the relationship between gaming motivation, aggression, and impulsivity. They found that specific gaming motivations, such as competition, can contribute to higher levels of aggression and impulsivity.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a cross-sectional design to examine the relationship between online gaming, sensation seeking, and aggression. This design allowed for the collection of data from a sample of adolescents engaged in online gaming at a single point in time, enabling the analysis of associations between these variables.

Sample

The sample consisted of 150 adolescent online gamers, aged between 13 and 18 years. Participants were selected based on their self-reported engagement in online gaming, ensuring that they met the criteria of active gamers. The sample included both male and female participants from various socioeconomic backgrounds, ensuring diversity within the group.

Hypothesis

i) There is no significant difference in sensation-seeking behavior among online gamers.
ii) There is no significant difference in aggressive behavior among online gamers.
iii) There is no significant difference in the level of sensation-seeking behavior among online gamers categorized as low, medium, and high sensation seekers.
iv) There is no significant difference in the level of aggressive behavior among online gamers categorized as low, medium, and high aggression.

Variables

1. **Independent Variable**: Level of online gaming engagement (measured in terms of frequency and duration of gaming).
2. **Dependent Variables**: Aggression (measured using the Buss and Perry Aggression Questionnaire) & Sensation Seeking (measured using the Brief Sensation Seeking Scale).

Instrument

1. **Buss and Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ)**: This was a widely used self-report instrument to measure aggression across four subscales: physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility.
2. **Brief Sensation Seeking Scale (BSSS)**: This was a self-report tool designed to measure individual differences in sensation-seeking behavior, which included tendencies toward thrill and adventure seeking, experience seeking, disinhibition, and boredom susceptibility.

Data Collection

Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires, which were distributed to the participants online. Informed consent was obtained from both participants and their parents (if under 18). The questionnaires were administered in a controlled environment, ensuring that all participants had a quiet space to complete the measures. Each participant filled out both the Buss and Perry Aggression Questionnaire and the Brief Sensation Seeking Scale.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using One-way ANOVA to assess the differences in aggression and sensation-seeking behavior across varying levels of gaming engagement. The ANOVA test was chosen because it allowed for the comparison of means across different groups (e.g., low, medium, and high levels of gaming intensity) and could determine if any statistically significant differences existed.

RESULTS

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Gamers, Sensation Seeking, and Aggression

Source		*N*	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*	*Minimum*	*Maximum*
ONLINE GAMERS	high	62	46.8387	6.01145	40.00	68.00
	moderate	39	35.3333	2.54779	32.00	39.00
	Low	49	23.7551	4.43251	18.00	31.00
	total	150	36.3067	10.99966	18.00	68.00
SS	high	62	26.4839	5.64450	16.00	37.00
	moderate	39	25.6923	5.74985	17.00	40.00
	Low	49	22.7755	6.67790	10.00	36.00
	total	150	25.0667	6.20529	10.00	40.00
Aggression	high	62	82.7419	15.19052	43.00	130.00
	Moderate	39	76.6667	15.17847	36.00	108.00
	Low	49	73.6939	20.69743	36.00	121.00
	total	150	78.2067	17.52440	36.00	130.00

Interpretation of the result

Online Gamers

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for online gamers categorized into high, moderate, and low levels reveal variations in their gaming scores. The high-level gamers group consists of 62 participants with a mean score of 46.84 and a standard deviation of 6.01, with scores ranging from 40.00 to 68.00. The moderate-level gamers group, comprising 39 participants, has a mean score of 35.33 and a standard deviation of 2.55, with scores between 32.00 and 39.00. The low-level gamers group, with 49 participants, shows a mean score of 23.76 and a standard deviation of 4.43, with scores ranging from 18.00 to 31.00. The overall mean gaming score for all 150 participants is 36.31, with a standard deviation of 10.99, indicating a wide spread of gaming behavior in the sample.

Sensation Seeking

The mean scores for sensation-seeking behavior among gamers also vary by group. The high sensation-seeking group (62 participants) has a mean score of 26.48 with a standard deviation of 5.64, and the scores range from 16.00 to 37.00. The moderate sensation-seeking group (39 participants) shows a mean score of 25.69 and a standard deviation of 5.75, with scores between 17.00 and 40.00. The low sensation-seeking group (49 participants) has a mean score of 22.78 with a standard deviation of 6.68, and the scores range from 10.00 to 36.00. The total mean for all 150 participants is 25.07, indicating overall moderate levels of sensation-seeking behavior, with scores varying widely as reflected by the standard deviation of 6.21.

Aggression

For aggression, the high aggression group of 62 participants has a mean score of 82.74 with a standard deviation of 15.19, with scores ranging from 43.00 to 130.00. The moderate aggression group (39 participants) has a mean score of 76.67 and a standard deviation of 15.18, with scores between 36.00 and 108.00. The low aggression group (49 participants) shows a mean score of 73.69, with a higher standard deviation of 20.70, indicating greater variability in this group, with scores ranging from 36.00 to 121.00. The overall mean score for aggression among all participants is 78.21, with a standard deviation of 17.52, suggesting moderate to high levels of aggression within the sample, with considerable variation.

Table 2 One-Way ANOVA Summary Table for Gamers, Sensation Seeking, and Aggression

Source		***SS***	***df***	***MS***	***F***
Online Gamers	Between Groups	14633.778	2	7316.889	316.896**
	Within Groups	3394.115	147	23.089	
	Total	18027.893	149		
Sensation Seeking	Between Groups	397.011	2	198.506	5.464*
	Within Groups	5340.322	147	36.329	
	Total	5737.333	149		
Aggression	Between Groups	2365.648	2	1182.824	4.007*
	Within Groups	43392.946	147	295.190	
	Total	45758.593	149		

**p<.01, *p<.05

Interpretation of the result

Online Gamers

Table 1 for online gamers indicate a statistically significant difference among the group means, F=316.896, p<.01, The Between Groups variance accounted for the majority of the total variance (14,633.778 out of 18,027.893). The mean square value for Between Groups (7,316.889) was much larger than the Within Groups mean square (23.089). This large F-ratio indicates strong evidence that the group means are significantly different.

Sensation Seeking

The Table 1 indicate the result for sensation seeking also shows a significant difference among the group means, F =5.464, p<.05. The Between Groups variance (397.011) was smaller than the Within Groups variance (5,340.322), but the F-value indicates a statistically significant difference. This suggests that while the effect size is smaller than for gamers, the group means still differ significantly.

Aggression

For Aggression, the table 1 results reveal a statistically significant difference among the group means, F=4.007, p=.02. The Between Groups variance (2,365.648) was relatively small compared to the Within Groups variance (43,392.946), with a mean square of 1,182.824 for Between Groups and 295.190 for Within Groups. The significant F-value indicates group differences, though the effect size is modest.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal significant relationships between online gaming, sensation seeking, and aggression, underscoring the complex interplay among these variables. Online gaming often serves as an engaging and stimulating activity that caters to individuals with high sensation-seeking tendencies. These individuals are drawn to novel and intense experiences, and online gaming provides a platform for fulfilling these needs through dynamic gameplay, competition, and virtual exploration. Sensation seekers may particularly enjoy games that involve high stakes, fast-paced action, and immersive environments, which align with their desire for excitement and arousal.

Aggression, on the other hand, is another factor intricately linked to online gaming. Certain types of games, especially those involving violent or competitive themes, may act as a catalyst for aggressive behaviors or attitudes. The interactive nature of online gaming can sometimes blur the lines between virtual aggression and real-world responses, particularly in highly competitive scenarios or when individuals are exposed to repeated aggressive stimuli within the game. For sensation seekers, who thrive on intense emotional experiences, such environments may amplify aggressive tendencies as a byproduct of their engagement.

The relationship between online gaming, sensation seeking, and aggression may also be influenced by factors such as the duration and type of game play, individual personality traits, and the social dynamics within gaming communities. While online gaming can provide a healthy outlet for sensation seekers and offer numerous cognitive and social benefits, excessive gaming or exposure to violent content may contribute to heightened aggression in susceptible individuals.

For gamers, the results reveal a substantial difference in group means, suggesting that the groups vary significantly in their engagement or behavior related to gaming. The findings underscore the possibility of distinct characteristics or factors influencing the behavior of individuals in different groups, warranting further exploration. Muezzin (2015) and Ozgur (2019) examined the relationship between gender, parental internet style, and online gaming addiction. Both studies found that male adolescents are more prone to online gaming addiction and that parental involvement can mitigate this risk.

In the case of sensation seeking, the analysis also demonstrates significant differences among the groups, though the effect size is more moderate. This suggests that while there are meaningful variations, these differences are less pronounced compared to those observed for online gamers. It is important to explore the underlying factors contributing to these differences, such as demographic or psychological variables. Hu et al. (2017) and Hamid et al. (2015) examined the relationship between sensation seeking and online gaming addiction. Both studies found a positive correlation, suggesting that sensation-seeking individuals may be more prone to gaming addiction.

Similarly, the findings for aggression indicate modest but significant differences across groups. Although the variations are less striking, they still point to meaningful distinctions that could be influenced by environmental, social, or personal factors. These results suggest the need for a more nuanced understanding of how aggression manifests differently across the groups of online gamers. Aggression negatively impacts individuals' physical and mental health as well as their career development (Moon et al., 2019; Mérida-López & Extremera, 2021). Given these implications, research into controlling and reducing aggression is critical. Ke et al. (2022), Madran and Çakılcı (2014), Dickmies & Roe (2019), Kumari, Sharma, &

Singh (2022), and Harbi (2019) investigated the relationship between video game genres, aggression, and impulsivity. These studies have found mixed results, with some suggesting a link between violent games and aggression, while others have not.

CONCLUSION

The one-way ANOVA results demonstrate significant differences in group means for all three variables: Gamers**,** Sensation Seeking**,** and Aggression. The effect size for online gamers is substantial, while for Sensation seeking and Aggression, the differences are significant but less pronounced. Overall, the results highlight the existence of significant group differences for all three variables studied.

Limitations and Further Research

This study has several limitations, including its cross-sectional design, which limits causal inferences, and reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce biases. The sample may not be representative of the broader population, and the study did not differentiate between types of games, which could have varying effects on sensation seeking and aggression. Additionally, the measurement tools used may not fully capture the complexity of these constructs.

Future research should adopt longitudinal and experimental designs to better understand causal relationships and explore how different game genres influence sensation seeking and aggression. It would also benefit from including more diverse samples and investigating psychological and social moderators. Finally, exploring intervention strategies to mitigate aggression while retaining the positive aspects of gaming is an important avenue for further study.

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Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Nagma, & Moral, A. (2025). A Study of Sensation Seeking and Aggressive Behaviour Among Online Gamers. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, *13*(2), 2249-2260. DIP:18.01.203.20251302, DOI:10.25215/1302.203