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## Parents' Perception of Family Dynamics When Their Children Use Video Games Excessively

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# Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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Joseph Collins

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Walden University  
2024

Abstract

Parents' Perceptions of Family Dynamics When Their Children Use Video Games

Excessively

by

Joseph Collins

MA, St. Mary's University, 2010

BA, University of Minnesota, 2007

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Teaching Psychology

Walden University

November 2024

## Abstract

Excessive video game use among youth has been linked to communication problems within families and disrupted family dynamics, notably reducing time spent with family members and reinforcing withdrawal from family activities and other recreational pursuits. While quantitative research has addressed the connection between children's excessive video gaming and its negative impact on family dynamics, a deeper understanding of parents' perceptions remained needed. This study aimed to explore how parents described family dynamics when their children engaged in excessive gaming, using attachment theory as the theoretical framework. Data were collected through semistructured interviews with 12 parents, and thematic analysis was used to analyze the interviews. The results provided insights into parents' perspectives on the role of excessive video gaming in shaping family dynamics. Parents identified several themes related to family, social, and school disruptions caused by gaming. To manage excessive gaming, parents employed strategies such as setting time limits during the school year and requiring children to complete chores or homework before playing, while ensuring consistent enforcement of these rules through mutual support in both single and co-parenting households. The findings of this study have the potential to promote positive social change by helping mental health professionals better support families dealing with children's problematic video gaming.

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## Dedication

This study is dedicated first to my loving and supporting wife and family. Because of your belief and support in me, I have been able to pursue all my professional and educational dreams. Second, this study is dedicated to the mental health clinicians who are working toward the support and enhancement of their fellow human.

## Acknowledgments

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

There has been a substantial number of studies conducted looking at the impact that video game playing has on children and teenagers. Beranuy et al. (2013) discussed how children who start to play video games excessively begin to prefer interactions through gaming rather than in-person relationships. Problems may emerge at school where students become disinterested in their studies (Haghbin et al., 2013), and problems can become visible in a decrease of behavioral regulation and mood control (Choi et al., 2018). In this study, I examined parents' perceptions of family dynamics when their children use video games excessively. I sought to gain understanding on what strategies parents use to limit or change their children's excessive video game use. The findings of this study provide insight to clinicians and future researchers about possible trends in family functioning with children for whom playing video games became problematic as well as gaining knowledge on how to support these families in their clinical work.

This chapter provides a general framework explaining the issues surrounding excessive video game use and how it can have a negative impact on family functioning. The framework for the study is then discussed along with an explanation of the use of a generic approach to a qualitative study. Next the goal of the study for gaining insight into parental perspectives of how excessive video game use impacts the family is discussed along with the limitations. Finally, the significance is discussed around trying to provide information to working professionals on how to utilize the information for possible therapeutic interventions.

## **Background**

Previous research has suggested that children and teenagers who engage in excessive video game use show signs of impaired social, behavioral, or occupational functioning (Bargeron & Hormes, 2017; Choi et al., 2018; Hum & Bums, 2018). Excessive game use is defined as a preoccupation with wanting to play video games, a tolerance for playing for long periods of time, disruptions in family or school relationships, poor school performance, lying, disregard for consequences for playing, and sneaking in time to play games (Turner et al., 2012). Berauny et al. (2013) conducted a study examining the impact on individuals of an excessive amount of time playing video games online and how too much time spent playing games could result in players experiencing loss of behavioral control and social struggles.

There are also predictive factors for teenagers developing problematic video game use, such as aggression, family conflict, and few school commitments (Xu et al., 2012; Yuh, 2018). Studies have been conducted to try to understand how much excessive video game use can negatively impact a child's day-to-day life. Wang and Wang (2013) investigated the effects of children who seek out social interactions through online games and how these children tend to rely more on online interactions than face-to-face encounters for social satisfaction. While excessive video game use is associated with negative outcomes, there have also been positive findings with youth who play video games. Playing video games has been associated with positive outcomes such as the development of prosocial behaviors (Gentile et al., 2009), psychological benefits related

to motivation and emotion (Granic et al., 2014), educational benefits (Squire, 2003), and family bonding (Wang et al., 2018).

The home environment a child is raised in might also play a role in the risk for a child developing a problematic habit of playing video games. Straker et al. (2014) theorized that, based on the information found in their study, children who have access to devices in their bedroom or are from lower socioeconomic status homes are more at risk for unhealthy game-playing habits. Children who have parents who also engage in excessive video game playing may be at risk of developing behaviors related to excessive gaming (Bonnaire & Phan, 2017; Straker et al., 2014). Based on the findings of Bonnaire and Phan (2017), a child from a household in which the parents are divorced could also be at risk for developing an addiction to playing video games.

A child's level of attachment to their parents can also be a factor in the possibility of developing problematic video game use. Utilizing Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory, King and Delfabbro (2017) stated that when children demonstrate an insecure attachment to their parents, they are more likely to find relationships through online gaming communities, which could lead to excessive playing. Schneider et al. (2017) explored the family home life of problematic video game players for the potential causes of children engaging in excessive video game playing. Children who felt they experienced a disruptive home life or were argumentative with their parents were more likely to play games excessively than peers who had stable and less discordant relationships with their parents (Schneider et al., 2017).

Previous studies have been conducted to examine children's reports of their experiences when they are excessively playing video games (Beranuy et al., 2013; Rothmund et al., 2016, Smith et al., 2015). The gap in the literature I hope to fill with this study is parents' perspectives of the role of their child's problematic video gaming on their family experience. The study may give insight to other clinicians about the experiences of parents in this situation and allow for further expansion in research on excessive video game use.

### **Problem Statement**

Excessive video game use among youth has been linked to a myriad of negative consequences including losing relationships in the real world (Cui et al., 2017), preferring socialization from online groups instead of engaging with others in personal social situations (Beranuy et al., 2013), decreasing school performance and motivation (Haghbin et al., 2013), and exhibiting irritable moods and shorter tempers (Choi et al., 2018). Excessive video gaming has also been shown to impact communication problems in the family and family dynamics (King & Delfabbro, 2016; Schneider et al., 2017; Turner et al., 2012; Wang & Wang, 2013). For example, when children with excessive video game habits are not allowed to play, they tend to engage in negative communication with their parents and even show physical aggression toward their parents or siblings (Kim et al., 2008). Spending less time with family members has also been observed as a negative consequence of children spending an excessive amount of time playing video games (Turner et al., 2012; Wang & Wang, 2013). In turn, disengaging from spending time with the family also appears to encourage continued use



of playing video games excessively and withdrawal from other recreational activities (Liu et al., 2012; Richards et al., 2010; Xiuqin et al., 2010).

While the link between children's excessive video game playing and negative impact on family dynamics has been addressed in the quantitative research literature (Schneider et al., 2017; Turner et al., 2012; Wang & Wang, 2013), there remains a need for a more in-depth understanding of how parents perceive family dynamics when their children play video game excessively (King & Delfabbro, 2017). Most research conducted on this topic has used school-based research or quantitative survey methods, which may preclude a more rich and extensive exploration. Additionally, the bulk of research on family dynamics and excessive video gaming has been surveys of children and adolescents. Studies exploring parents' perspectives are warranted (Bonnaire & Phan, 2017; Smith et al., 2015).

### **Purpose**

This study sought to explore how parents describe family dynamics when their children use video games excessively. I also aimed to understand what strategies parents use to limit or change their children's excessive video game practices. The phenomenon under study is family dynamics in the context of children's excessive video game use. Excessive video game use is defined as a preoccupation with wanting to play video games, a tolerance for playing for over 2 hours of time according to the American Medical Association for problematic gaming (Kuss & Griffiths, 2012), disruptions in family or school relationships, poor school performance, lying, disregard for consequences for playing, and sneaking in time to play games (Turner et al., 2012).

Participants for this study will be parents who report that their children engage in excessive video game use as defined above. Data were collected through semistructured interviews of parents.

The research questions for the study are:

RQ1: How do parents describe family relations when having children engaging in excessive video game use? Have there been observed positives?

RQ2: What strategies do parents use to limit or change their children's excessive video game use?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical basis for this study is Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory, which describes the dynamics of short- and long-term interpersonal relationships. Infants attach to their caregivers and the quality of this early attachment becomes significant in the children's development and in learning how to regulate their feelings. Bowlby (1969) explained that parents and children must work jointly to maintain their relationship in a manner consistent with cognitive representations derived from their history of interactions with significant others. Children and parents work on trusting one another and building those relationships from birth through adulthood (Fletcher & Gallichan, 2017).

Attachment is disrupted or becomes inadequate when children perceive that parents do not adapt their internal perspectives or their own expectations in line with their children's social, emotional, and behavioral development. As children age with their parents, their relationships tend to continue to be either positive or negative, trending

from what was happening earlier in the child's life (King & Delfabbro, 2017). Family relationships can benefit when parents show an interest in playing games with their children and use it as a bonding activity rather than a point of contention in the home (Wang et al., 2018). From the attachment theory perspective, Fletcher et al. (2014) observed that due to initial inconsistent interactions and comfort from parents, children may not learn how to cope with certain behaviors, which puts them at risk for developing addictions to substances or other outlets. Insecure attachment styles in adolescents have been linked to engagement in risky behaviors, including different types of addictions (Gerra et al., 2009).

In the framework of attachment theory, three factors are described as shaping the quality of parent-child attachment: (a) trust, (b) communication, and (c) feeling of alienation (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Bowlby, 1988). These factors contribute positively or negatively to the quality of parental attachment. Trust refers to adolescents' confidence that parents understand and respect their needs and desires; communication refers to adolescents' perceptions that parents are sensitive and responsive to their emotional states; and alienation refers to adolescents' feelings of isolation, anger, and detachment experienced in attachment relationships with parents (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Guarnieri et al., 2010). These concepts from attachment theory have been used to explain parent-child interactions and family dynamics (e.g., Guarnieri et al., 2010; Ishak et al., 2010). Attachment theory applied to problematic gaming in adolescence indicates that adolescents with insecure attachment styles seek out the security and emotional comfort that virtual relationships in internet games provide (Milani et al., 2009).

Satisfying relationship and security needs through relying on internet game use may then develop into a pattern of avoidance and/or conflict with parents (King & Delfabbro, 2017).

### **Nature of Study**

The nature of this study was qualitative using the generic approach. A generic approach is typically used when a study examines people's opinions, attitudes, and beliefs concerning their experiences of events, things, or situations in the outer world (Percy et al., 2015). Generic qualitative inquiry, which focuses on the content of life experiences and participants' reflections, aligns with the purpose of this study. I explored reported family dynamics according to parents who feel that their child or children engage excessively in video games. I chose the generic approach as it allows for flexibility over other models and allows researchers to explore original perspectives while also examining the research problem (Percy et al., 2015). The generic approach is also adaptable to and in line with the goals of trying to explore the experiences of parents and their perceptions of their children's excessive video game use. The generic approach was used to explore family dynamics and parenting strategies from parents whose children engage in excessive video game use.

This study took place during an interesting period in history, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Typically, a qualitative study would be done with face-to-face interviews; however, there were certain safety precautions that needed to be put into place to ensure my safety as well as the safety of the parent participants. Because of this event, there were considerations made on the process of conducting interviews, such as ensuring

parent participants would have access to a secure communication application as well as having a space to communicate freely and privately. I conducted interviews with parents of a child or children ages 6–17 whom they reported as engaging in excessive video game use. These parents were recruited in northern U.S. Midwest areas in local mental health clinics and pediatrician offices. I used social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) to spread out recruitment efforts to the expansive area in the northern U.S. Midwest. Participants gained through these methods were interviewed either in face-to-face format or via a web-based platform such as Skype or Zoom. Through these recruitment methods, I hoped to reach a wider participant pool in northern U.S. Midwest areas. Data were analyzed in this study using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **Operational Definitions**

The following terms are operational definitions and were implemented throughout the scope of this research and dissertation.

*Excessive video game use:* The engagement of playing video games for over 2 hours per day (Kuss & Griffiths, 2012). Problems that can arise from this include behavioral struggles (physical or verbal aggression; Barger & Hormes, 2017) or when there is an avoidance of household chores or social obligations (time with peers or school or work events; Choi et al., 2007).

*Family dynamics:* Bonnaire and Phan (2017) noted there are multiple pieces that contribute to family dynamics, but parenting styles, conflictual interactions, and the amount of stress in the home environment also add to the dynamics of a family. In their study of problematic game players, Schneider et al. (2017) described family dynamics as

tense and argumentative. Family dynamics also refers to the parent and child relationship and covers interaction aspects such as communication, alienation, and trust (King & Delfabbro, 2016).

*Risk factors:* These are the noted factors that could predispose a child to becoming engaged in excessive video game use. Some of the risk factors discussed are family traits like how well they engage with one another (Smith et al., 2015) or personality traits such as those who prefer to avoid social interactions (Straker et al., 2014).

*Video game addiction:* This carries a similar connotation to excessive video game use but also has a resemblance to addictions to things like alcohol, drugs, or gambling (Bargeron & Hormes, 2017). Bargeron and Hormes (2017) discussed that with video game addiction, there are symptoms of craving more time playing, agitation when going through extended periods of time away from game playing, and constant thinking about playing video games again in the future.

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are made when conducting a study of this nature. There was the assumption that the parents would answer the screening and interview questions truthfully and to the best of their abilities. I also assumed that the parents would have a vested interest in this study and would want to contribute to the findings. Lastly, I also assumed that participants in this study would want to aid in research and would not be out to try to gain anything, financially or socially, from participation.

## Scope

The purpose of this study was to explore how parents describe family dynamics when their children use video game excessively. I also sought to understand what strategies parents use to limit or change their children's excessive video game use. The study generated data through semistructured interviews in which parents answered questions about their experiences of parenting and living with a child who, in their opinion, has a problem in their video game use. Local mental health clinics, nonprofits, and professional referrals in a major metropolitan area in the northern U.S. Midwest was the main area of interest for participants.

For the family or the parent to be eligible to participate in the interview process, they needed to meet certain criteria: (a) reported difficulties in the parent and child relationship due to the child's excessive video game use, (b) have a child or children between ages 8 and 17, and (c) be fluent in reading and speaking English. Once families made it through the prescreening process, 10-12 families were chosen to conduct the semistructured interviews, which provided the rich data needed to make connections and observations through the study.

To determine the sample size for this study, the concept of saturation was considered. Data saturation or thematic saturation refers to the point at which data collection is exhausted given that no additional issues are identified, data become redundant, and information begins to repeat (Kerr et al., 2010). This broad application of saturation is not tied to any unique research design or tradition but focuses on providing some direction into sample size (Hennink et al., 2017). Fusch and Ness (2015) provided

guidelines to understand this concept and indicated that saturation is reached when enough information and data have been obtained to replicate the study, when avenues for new data have been explored, and when additional coding and analysis have been exhausted. Additionally, according to Guest et al. (2006), a sample size of 12 participants is appropriate when using a semistructured interview guide and without a specific consideration to the research design or tradition used. They indicated that most variation in the codes occurs between the first and 12th interviews. I expected that 10-12 families would be enough to reach saturation. This target sample size was selected given the likelihood of reaching saturation with this number of homogeneous participants from this specific group of interest. Should there be additional themes or negative cases discovered in the study, more participants may have been needed to explore those themes and provide a cohesive and thorough study.

### **Delimitations**

There are a few delimitations to my study. The first is that I did not recruit participants within my group practice where I work. I have several colleagues in the building, but to avoid possible ethical violations, I sought out professional referrals for participants who were at other agencies. Data were collected in a major metropolitan area in the northern U.S. Midwest. Having colleagues in different parts of the metro area helped break up the possibilities of participants encountering one another. Parents who reported having children between ages 8 and 17 with reported excessive video game use were selected for this study.



### **Limitations**

Recruitment of participants took place in one geographical area; thus, there could have been difficulties in transferring the results to other areas. Data for this study were collected through Zoom meetings as well as in-person interviews. There was also a concern that due to holding Zoom or virtual interviews, participants may not open up in a free manner when doing a video interview from home rather than having the security of a face-to-face interview. Another limitation was that due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, there may have been an unwillingness for participants to want to come into the office to do interviews. While interviews could have been done through screen-based programs, it could have been hard to determine nonverbal cues of the participant.

I also had some of my own biases to be aware of. Through my practice, I work with a good number of children and teenagers who struggle with their video game use, and because of my work with these clients, I likely had some preconceived ideas that I needed to try to put aside as best as possible. To work through any biases that arose, I journaled my thoughts and feelings about the study as it happened to make sure I kept my feelings in check. I also checked in frequently with my committee members to help work through any thoughts or biases that arose. Further exploration and definitions of other limitations and biases are provided in Chapter 3.

### **Significance**

This research was conducted to address the gap in understanding how parents describe their family dynamics when their children use video games excessively. Results of this study have the potential to provide insight into parental perspectives on how

children's excessive video game use plays a role in their family dynamics. Results of this study may raise awareness of the struggles families face when raising children who engage in excessive video game use. Additionally, insights from this project may help understand what parents view as being problematic with their children's video game use and what parenting strategies they use to help family functioning. Results from this study may help mental health professionals gain an understanding of how to support families who struggle with children's problematic video game playing. Based on these results, parents and professionals can get ideas on how to develop a plan for fostering stronger family relationships and creating healthier habits for video game use in the household.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided a general description of the phenomenon of interest in this study while also describing the theoretical and empirical support for the research questions and purpose of this study. The chapter highlighted some of the potential risk factors for children and how they could possibly play video games excessively, as well as where there are areas that could be improved in the aspects of the future of research. There was also the mention of the unique way the study was carried out due to the global pandemic and having to shift how the study may be completed. In the next chapter, I describe the current literature on excessive video game use. There is also a discussion about the design of the study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The use of video games among both children and adults has increased significantly over the past decade since game players have been given the chance to engage with one another through the internet, using it as a means of building social relationships with other players (Schimmenti et al., 2014; Schneider et al., 2017; Xu et al., 2012). The United States continues to see its children gain access to game systems with 65% of 8–18-year-olds owning a handheld game system and having at least one game console in their bedroom (Straker et al., 2014). Thus, the industry of video gaming is not showing signs of slowing down, with sales of over 24 billion games and profits of over 30 billion dollars in 2016 (Entertainment Software Association, 2018). The gaming market has a strong impact on how children are spending their free time.

The expansion of the video game industry has led some professionals to view the negative perspectives of its behavioral impact on children and their families. Many argue that video games are continuing to push children and even adults to spend more time building their lives in a digital world and neglect their daily responsibilities (Schimmenti et al., 2014; Schneider et al., 2017; Xu et al., 2012). Due to spending so much time engaged in a digital world, children are losing real-world friends (Cui et al., 2017), which creates a preference for socialization via digital means rather than face to face (Beranuy et al., 2013). Other negative aspects include decreased motivation for academic success (Haghbin et al., 2013) and emotional disruptions such as unstable mood and decreased frustration tolerance (Choi et al., 2018). Lastly, the excessive use of video games by children have had noted negative impacts on familial relationships (King & Delfabbro,

2016; Schneider et al., 2017; Turner et al., 2012; Wang & Wang, 2013). These key perspectives from previous research shows how excessive video game use as a negative impact on the behavioral development of children.

Alternatively, some researchers have noted benefits to allowing children to play video games such as development of some prosocial behaviors (Gentile et al., 2009), psychological gains in abilities to build on motivation and emotion (Granic et al., 2014), educational gains (Squire, 2003), and even some positive family interactions (Wang et al., 2018). Granic et al. (2014) argued that video games can help boost motivation to perform better on a task and help build on social interactions with others. Wang et al. (2018) stated that they feel families who utilize video games as a means of interaction can help build bonds with one another and offer friendly competition. Many of the mentioned authors indicated in their studies that much of the research on video game playing is focused on negative perspectives and argued for studying more of the positive perspectives.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

When conducting the search for articles for my literature review, there were several different databases and methods used. First, I began my search using the Walden University Library and EBSCO. The second most used search engine was Google Scholar as that would lead to main studies being cited in other studies that were relevant. This allowed me a broad search for different and similar studies. Lastly, I used other traditional psychology-based search engines such as PSYCHInfo, PubMed, PSYCHArticles, PSYCNet, Science Direct, and Sage Journals. I filtered my results to

only include peer-reviewed articles as well as a small number of textbooks to help define pieces of my theoretical approach. Key terms that were used in these searches included *video game addiction, excessive video game use, family attachment, video games and families, video game consequences, children and video game addiction, teenagers and video games, problematic video game use, impulsiveness and video games, parent relationships, and positive video game use.*

### **Theoretical Framework**

Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory provided the foundation for this investigation. Bowlby described the dynamics of short- and long-term interpersonal relationships. Infants attach to their caregivers and the quality of this early attachment becomes significant in the children's development and in learning how to regulate their feelings. Bowlby explained that parents and children must work jointly to maintain their relationship in a manner consistent with cognitive representations derived from their history of interactions with significant others. Children and parents work on trusting one another and building those relationships from birth through adulthood (Fletcher & Gallichan, 2017).

Within the framework of attachment theory, three factors are described as shaping the quality of parent-child attachment: (a) trust, (b) communication, and (c) feeling of alienation (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Bowlby, 1988). These factors contribute positively or negatively to the quality of parental attachment. Trust refers to an adolescent's trust that their parents understand and respect their needs and desires (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Guarnieri et al., 2010). Communication refers to an

adolescent's perceptions that their parents are sensitive and responsive to their emotional states. Finally, alienation refers to an adolescent's feelings of isolation, anger, and detachment experienced in attachment relationships with parents (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Guarnieri et al., 2010). Applying attachment theory to problem gaming in adolescence indicates that adolescents with insecure attachment styles seek out the security and emotional comfort that virtual relationships within internet games provide (Milani et al., 2009). Satisfying relationship and security needs through relying on internet game use may then develop a pattern of avoidance and/or conflict with parents (King & Delfabbro, 2017). The attachment theory proposed by Bowlby can possibly explain how children and teenagers seek out video games to fill voids in their lives that are not being met by their family relationships.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Concepts**

#### **Defining Excessive Video Game Use**

There are several definitions of *excessive video game use* but there are some common themes that tend to arise when looking at multiple studies conducted on the subject. Excessive video game use shares similar traits to other types of behavioral addictions, such as gambling, shopping, sexual activity, and exercise (Bargeron & Hormes, 2017). Individuals who engage in excessive video game use have lower social competence, elevated impulsiveness, decreases in happiness, and a loss for a sense of time (Bargeron & Hormes, 2017; Laconi et al., 2017). Video game use can become problematic or excessive due to both negative (avoidance of negative affect state) and positive reinforcement (the receipt of fictional rewards or further advancement in the

game; Choi et al., 2007). Rewards in the games could come in the form of achievement trophies, which can then be shown off as a badge of honor. Certain video game environments have also been created to give players near-win situations that then feeds them the desire to continue playing until there are consequences, such as preoccupation and a loss of control (Ghosh, 2018). There are certain games that will put players in more difficult environments with other players, almost forcing them to lose to encourage them to spend more time playing the game (Ghosh, 2018). Some mobile games also add in features players can pay for to try to gain an advantage, which could add to the desire to play more.

From a clinical standpoint, the American Psychiatric Association (APA, 2019) has started to recognize the impact of excessive video game use by adding in internet gaming disorder (IGD) to the *DSM-5*. The APA (2019) has diagnosis and symptom criteria like the definition by Choi et al. (2007), who stated that individuals are diagnosable with IGD when they have trouble (a) separating from games, (b) choose to play over social activities, (c) have an increased tolerance to playing, (d) deceive family members to play games, and (e) are at risk of losing a job or relationship. The APA also explained that symptoms need to have been present for at least a year and be causing significant distress in the individual's life. IGD can present differently for different people and among adults and children.

With regards to children, excessive video game use is defined as such that children experience increased symptoms of impulsiveness and preferring to play games rather than spend time with their friends (Bargeron & Hormes, 2017; Choi et al., 2007;

Ghosh, 2018; Laconi et al., 2017). In other studies, researchers have noticed that children who excessively play video games also avoid interactions with their family members (Turner et al., 2012; Wang & Wang, 2013), have communication difficulties (King & Delfabbro, 2016; Schneider et al., 2017), and even have behavioral reactions such as verbal or physical aggression (Kim et al., 2008). Excessive video game use can manifest itself in several ways but shows most difficulties in being able to tolerate separation and preoccupation with wanting to play more than the recommended 2 hours a day maximum.

### **Consequences of Excessive Video Game Use**

In their definitions of excessive video game use, some researchers also touch on the consequences of what may happen when there is an individual who engages in excessive video game use. In the literature, there are many different consequences that can arise, ranging from social, behavioral, increasing addictive traits, struggles with parents, and negative impacts on occupational (school/work) functions.

From a social perspective of excessive video game playing, consequences can be severe if individuals reach some of the more extreme points. When exploring the impact of children playing video games excessively, there are missed opportunities for social engagement with peers and honing socialization skills (Pryzyblski & Mishkin, 2016). There have been observations of male adolescents who have engaged in excessive video game use and experienced poor social and informal relations, social communication difficulties, and the attempt to replace in-person friends with online game-based friends (Rasmussen et al., 2015). Game play and avoiding social interaction is also observable,



showing that those who choose to engage primarily in video games choose to avoid social obligations (Cummings & Vandewater, 2007; Rasmussen et al., 2015).

Social difficulties were also observed in Asian students who reported being addicted to video games and neglecting spending time with peers in a physical setting but preferred to play with friends via a virtual world in video games (Wang & Wang, 2013; Xiuqin et al., 2010). Children who engage in excessive video game use have greater difficulties in being able to interact with their counterparts appropriately socially in school or other social settings as well as exhibiting behavioral struggles as well (Bargeron & Hormes, 2017; Beranuy et al., 2013).

Excessive video game use observed in several studies has shown that children show greater psychological symptoms or behavioral challenges toward their parents. Children who use video games excessively showed increases in psychological symptoms such as depression, anxiety, impulsivity, aggression, narcissism, and life stress (Bargeron, & Hormes, 2017; Beranuy et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2008). Adolescents who engage in excessive video game use show an increase in negative behaviors, and the behaviors worsen with daily game play (Xiuqin et al., 2010). There is an observed trend that these adolescents also display personality struggles such as introversion or psychoticism (Xiuqin et al., 2010).

Accompanied by behavioral struggles, children who use video games excessively also show an increase in an already addictive personality type (Choi et al., 2018). The families in this study also had a reported family history of addictive personality traits and engaging in excessive video game play made these traits more prominent (Choi et al.,

2018). Parental education had also been provided to parents with addictive personalities, explaining that their children may show addictive traits to playing video games if done so excessively (Straker et al., 2014). Families who have addictive personalities are at risk of having their children develop addictions to video games (or substances) as well as those traits coming out when engaged in over-stimulating activities (Schneider et al., 2017). Staying with the theme of families, many of these studies also touched on the impact of children's excessive video game use on their family dynamics.

Several authors discussed how there are increased family stress and strained relationships with parents when children engage in excessive video game use (Bonnaire & Phan, 2017; Choi et al., 2018; Cui et al., 2018; King et al., 2014; King et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2012; Richards et al., 2010; Schimmenti et al., 2014; Schneider et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2015; Straker et al., 2014; Wang, et al., 2018; Xiuqin et al., 2018; Zorbaz et al., 2014). Strained relationships with the parents were noted as being anywhere from having arguments about time spent playing games, becoming physically aggressive when asked to stop playing (Bonnaire & Phan, 2017; King et al., 2014; Schimmenti et al., 2014), or simply choosing to avoid spending time with family (King et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2015).

Several authors also discussed a disconnect in family members feeling like they were having problems in being able to connect with their child who was excessively engaging in video game use (Bonnaire & Phan, 2017; Wang et al., 2018). Family relationships can benefit when parents show an interest in playing games with their children and use it as a bonding activity rather than a point of contention in the house

(Wang et al., 2018). One of the final identified themes of consequences for excessive video game use is that those individuals had struggles meeting their obligations in educational or occupational settings.

There have been findings that children and teens will utilize video games as a means of enjoyment or stress relief but, when taken too far, will result in escapism from stressors (Beranuy et al., 2013). With this engagement in escapism, children will avoid doing their homework or studying for tests and with adults there can be a failure to go to work (Beranuy et al., 2013; Richards et al., 2010). Students who reported excessively playing video games showed delinquency in school attendance, academic achievement was negatively impacted, including lower GPA, and there was a dismissive attitude toward school (Choi, et al., 2018; Haghbin et al., 2013; Turner et al., 2012; Zorbaz et al., 2014).

The physical location of the video game system can also play a role in being a risk for a child playing video games excessively. Smith et al. (2015) surveyed over 400 teenagers about their video game playing habits and environments. Children and teenagers who have a device in their bedroom and are unsupervised during their playing times are more likely to develop excessive video game playing habits (Smith et al., 2015). Parental education about the impact of their children's excessive video game use can help work on reducing some of those behaviors. Parents are encouraged to set limits on game playing and having children complete homework and studying in a room where devices cannot be accessed (Smith et al., 2015; Xu et al., 2012). There are laid out

consequences for children and teenagers participating in excessive video game use; however, many risk factors also contribute to possible excessive video game use.

### **Risk Factors of Excessive Video Game Use**

There were a few different themes which emerged when exploring the risk factors for children playing video games excessively. Bernauy et al (2013) conducted face to face interviews with nine individuals that reported being addicted to playing video games and recorded their responses on the traits that led to gaming addiction. They centered around family factors, personality traits of the child or teen, and the experienced negative consequences of excessively playing video games. There appear to be three observed traits for those children who are engaging in excessive video game use (Bernauy et al., 2013). Children who want to escape their problems rather than cope as well as having struggles with making friends physically will seek out virtual friendships instead (Bernauy et al., 2013). These personality traits that cause children to want to run from their problems or reduce the efforts to make friends drive them to spending time with others online and playing games to distract them or give them the feelings of friendly connections (Bernauy et al., 2013). There were 246 children from multicultural families that reported difficulties with being able to make friends and would turn to playing video games to establish their social connections (Choi et al., 2018). Additionally, children from multicultural studies scored higher on an addiction scale in their survey, which put them at risk for not just developing an addiction to video games, but at risk for other things like gambling or substance addictions (Choi et al., 2018).

The excessive use of video games also has ties for children to try and escape their problems. Rothmund et al. (2016) surveyed 488 German children and adolescents who were on the verge of becoming addicted to playing video games or using games excessively at home. Children who reported to being addicted to playing video games used games to escape stress (Rothmund et al., 2016). The thought was that these children struggled to cope with stress or appropriately address problems that were bothering them, so they would turn to playing video games rather than work through their difficulties (Rothmund et al., 2016). The problem continues to get worse then because issues will build up more and then the children become more conditioned to seek out video games rather than other types of support (Rothmund et al., 2016). There have been efforts made by researchers about how parents and professionals could help these children with video game addiction (Straker et al., 2014).

Mentioned earlier, Straker et al. (2014) gives suggestions about how parents can support their children and what to look out for if their children are becoming addicted to video games. Children are encouraged to seek out communication with their parents or counselors to work through their emotional stress rather than turning to video games (Straker et al., 2014). Developmentally speaking to video game addiction, escaping from problems to play games reinforces children to seek out a substance or other type of feel-good device to handle their problems (Straker et al., 2014). Parents should continue being involved in their children's lives and provide emotional support and a safe place for children to work through their feelings (Straker et al., 2014). Children who show signs of struggling with socialization are encouraged to try and join groups of similar interests as

other kids, sports teams, or other social outings to try and promote face to face communication (Straker et al., 2014). Children have their own unique factors about what can put them at risk for becoming addicted to playing video games, but there are also family factors that can put children at risk for developing an addiction to playing video games.

The structure of the family can also influence the possibility of children developing an addiction to playing video games. Children coming from a multicultural background could lead to playing games excessively to gain social interactions, but also families who are dual income pose a risk for children becoming addicted to playing games (Choi et al., 2018). Dual income families are defined as those where both parents in the house are working a full-time job or earning a salary (Choi et al., 2018). When both parents are working and not spending time with their children, their children will use video games for a free time activity (Choi et al., 2018).

A child's attachment to their parents also contributes to children becoming addicted to playing video games (Richards et al., 2010). Richards et al. (2010) examined data from cohorts of children and adolescents 16 years apart from one another looking at parental attachment and amount of time spent on screen-based activities. Children with lower attachment to their parents are more at risk for developing an addiction to playing video games because it is how they want to spend their free time rather than with family (Richards et al., 2010). Children are likely to have lower attachment to their parents due to an uninvolved style or being separated for long periods (Richards et al., 2010). There is a possibility that parents' own rules about children having devices and their locations in

the house that could encourage excessive video game playing. Teens who reported being addicted to playing video games had parents who were intrusive and lacking in responsiveness (Xiuquin et al., 2010).

Parents who allow children to have video game devices in their bedrooms could inadvertently encourage children to play video games excessively (Smith et al., 2015). This also supports the study done by Richards et al. (2010) and their discussion about having poor attachment with parents because they are being uninvolved and allowing their children to play games unmonitored. Parents can try and combat video game addiction, by setting time limits and having frequent discussions about cybersafety to help decrease the amount of time children spend in their rooms playing video games (Smith et al., 2015). Children should be provided with education around appropriate video game use and having a balance to ensure decreasing the risk of developing an addiction to playing video games (Straker et al., 2014).

Family dynamics of children who are addicted to playing video games have been explored and children who felt discouraged by the interactions with their family members led them to spend more time with playing video games (Zorbaz et al., 2014). Zorbaz et al. (2014) surveyed close to 400 fourth-to-sixth-grade-age students on their gaming habits and relationships with their parents, as well as surveyed different demographics about those parents educational and occupational backgrounds. Parental educational level could influence their children being more likely to become addicted to playing video games (Zorbaz et al., 2014). Parents who had less than a college education had children who were likely to develop an addiction to playing video games (Zorbaz et al., 2014).

Referring to the studies done by Smith et al. (2015) and Straker et al. (2014) it is beneficial to provide parents education about the risks of video game addiction and how they as a family minimize the risks of their children's excessive video game use. Through these themes, the studies discussed lead to the culmination of negative consequences of the children who are addicted to playing video games.

There are several different observed negative consequences that were reported during the review of the literature. Children who were engaged in excessive video game play experienced higher levels of anxiety and depression (Bargeron & Hormes 2017). Children and teenagers who were reported as addicted to playing video games had lower frustration tolerance levels and would be more prone to being aggressive (Kim et al., 2008). Students who played video games daily showed lack of motivation for school and had contentions in their relationships with their family members (Turner et al., 2012; Xu et al., 2012; Zorbaz et al., 2014). Family dynamics can also play a role in addiction levels to games and negative experiences with family members.

### **Family Dynamics and Children's Excessive Video Game Use**

There exist several family dynamic pieces that can either help or hinder the amount of time that a child will spend excessively playing a video game, the most pronounced being parenting styles, conflict in interactions between parent and child, and stress in the home environment. Attachment theory is being used as the theoretical framework for this dissertation, pieces of trust, communication, and alienation were also reviewed on how it influences the family environment and how those are negatively affected when a child is playing games excessively.



Parenting styles and boundaries set with their children was one of the more prominent themes when examining the relationship of family dynamics of children and video game addiction. Bonnaire and Phan (2017) surveyed 434 children and adolescents, 37 of which were identified as problematic gamers and compared them to the remaining participants on their relationships with their parents. Children who were identified as addicted to playing video games, or problematic gamers, had parents who were more lenient on the rules of playing video games and had children who reported staying up late at night playing games (Bonnaire & Phan, 2017; Schneider et al., 2015). Parents can be proactive about teaching their children about the risks of video game addiction, but the largest protection factor came from limiting access to the gaming devices (Schneider et al., 2015). Teens who were identified as problematic gamers had less family cohesion compared to non-problematic gamers (Bonnaire & Phan, 2017).

There were themes about households that had children from multicultural and dual income households and how those children used video games (Choi et al., 2018). From a parenting styles perspective, Choi et al. (2018) found that in the dual income household, those students were under less supervision and would develop a gaming addiction to pass the time. Sometimes with the dual income houses, parents were less engaged with their children due to obligations around the house and the children who were addicted to playing games continued to play video games (Choi et al., 2018). Compared to single income houses, Choi et al. (2018) observed that those parents engaged more with their children, and that those kids spent less time playing games.

When parents provide little to no mediation of their children's video game use, there is a risk that they can develop an addiction to playing games (Choi et al., 2018; Cui et al., 2018). Parents who did not limit time spent playing games would have children at higher risk of developing a gaming addiction (Bonnaire & Phan, 2017; Cui et al., 2018). Parents who are uninvolved or have negative interactions with their children put them at risk for developing a video game addiction (King & Delfabbro, 2017; Schneider et al., 2017). When parents are perceived by their children as being uninvolved or having high conflict, they will choose to play video games to distance themselves (King & Delfabbro, 2017). Children sought out games or internet-based interactions to get their emotional needs met that are not happening at home (King & Delfabbro, 2017). Rothmund et al. (2016) also supported this by stating in their study that children would avoid family stress by playing video games.

Experienced abuse by parents can lead to insecure attachment and possible video game addiction (Schimmenti et al., 2014). With previous studies, parental disengagement can be a factor of influencing their children's video game addiction. Schimmenti et al. (2014) surveyed 310 students aged 18-19 that reported experiencing a form of physical or sexual abuse and found that through children's experience of abuse, they sought out playing video games as a means of trying to work through their problematic relationships with their abuser. Adolescents who reported their parents as being intrusive or punitive were more likely to spend time avoiding their parents by playing games rather than working on that relationship with their parents (Xiuqin et al., 2010). While these studies focus on more extreme concepts their authors continue to show a spectrum in which

negative relationships with the parents can put their children at risk for becoming addicted to playing video games.

Parents who were disengaged and did not set limits around their children's video game use were more likely to develop an addiction to these devices over parents who were more involved with their children (Richards et al., 2010). Parents are encouraged to spend time with their children and engage around positive gaming along with setting limits (Straker et al., 2014). There are also findings that families with good communication and time spent with their children helped prevent the risk of video game addiction (Wang et al., 2018). Families with poor communication are encouraged to try and start with playing games as a family to work on building positivity through activities the children enjoy (Wang et al., 2018). This continues to support the previous studies observing parenting styles that are not engaged with their children.

There have been findings that when parents stuck to their own beliefs about internet and gaming use, their children were likely to follow suit and not develop problems with gaming (Liu et al., 2012). Liu et al. (2012) however found that when parents took the approach of "do as I say and not as I do" when setting limits for their children and video games their children would disobey. When children get older, they are expecting their parents to also follow the rules that they set and when there is a difference in enforcement, children are more likely to disobey, leading to the risk of developing an addiction to playing video games (Liu et al., 2012).

There have been observations with interaction that appear to predict if a child would develop an addiction to video game playing. When family members had negative

perspectives about gaming there were likely to be problems with the amount of time spent playing video games (Bonnaire & Phan, 2017). The problematic gamers, for both genders, also reported having poor cohesion and high conflict in the home (Bonnaire & Phan, 2017).

Several reasons explain as to why children from dual income and multicultural backgrounds could develop an addiction to playing video games, but it is noted that the family environment played more of a factor in dual income families (Choi et al., 2018). Parents who were disengaged from their children reported that they felt no control over their children (Choi et al., 2018). With the lack of perceived control over their children, parents felt that many of their interactions with their children were disrespectful (Choi et al., 2018). Cui et al. (2018) also supported these findings in that when parents' poor communication about setting limits with their children and video games, they would be met with defiance and disrespectful communication.

Using concepts of attachment theory to discuss the nature of interactions and relationships between parents and teenagers on how those could contribute to video game addiction (King & Delfabbro, 2017). When families have nurturing relationships, they must continue into adolescence to stay that way, while same can be said for those that have poor interactions (King & Delfabbro, 2017). What ends up happening with the continued inconsistency is that as the children age, they may have the desire to distance themselves more from their parents (King & Delfabbro, 2017). When children had poor attachment with their parents, they were more likely to have negative interactions and avoid them by isolating and playing video games or watching television (King &

Delfabbro, 2017; Richards et al., 2010). From these studies it is important to understand that positive engagement with parents at an early age can help promote a nurturing environment

When children felt that their parents solely focused on the relationship of their children, they were met with resistance to seek out playing more games (Schimmentti et al., 2014). The importance of parents allowing for a balance in their relationship with their children as coming off as too involved can turn children to wanting to play games rather than interact with family (Schimmentti et al., 2014). Parents are also encouraged to promote a balanced system of free time in the home where limits are set on game time and family time to continually build on those relationships (Schimmentti et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2015). Discoveries have been made with families with poor communication with children who are addicted to playing games could use cooperative games to try to build those positive relationships through the child's interest (Wang et al., 2018).

The parent's attitudes and how they convey those messages to their teenagers could have an impact on if their teens will continue to excessively use video games (Schneider et al., 2017). Parents are encouraged to try and learn more about games and spending time with their children in a positive way (Schneider et al., 2017). When parents are overbearing toward their children, they would rather spend time playing games than spending time with family members (Xiuqin et al., 2010; Zorbaz et al., 2014). The culmination of these studies encourages supportive interactions and keep flexible thoughts about video game use can help discourage children escaping within the family environment to play games.

Stress in the home environment is the final aspect discussed in this section of the literature review. The previous studies explored how negative interactions seemed to encourage video game addictions, but these negative interactions could also cause stress in the home that can make the video game addictions even more frustrating to work through.

The home environment was also explored in many of these studies as the impact of the child's video game addiction also caused unwanted stress around the home. Parents who reported a tense home environment also reported marital stress around differences in parenting strategies (Bonnaire & Phan, 2017; Cui, et al., 2018). Previously strained relationships can influence children being addicted to video games. When parents felt their children were addicted to gaming, the household was stressful when parents tried to intervene on time spent playing games (Zorbaz et al., 2014).

Families who already have strained relationships put higher amounts of stress in the household which could cause children to want to spend more time playing games (King & Delfabbro, 2017). Should parents join their children in shared interests, specifically playing games, there is potential to repair those relationships and decrease stress (King & Delfabbro, 2017). When parents have strained relationships with their children, they are likely to have kids engage in excessive video game use, they may also spend too much time on screens themselves (Liu et al., 2012). Parents who also have their own struggles with managing time on screens and become upset when their children also spend too much time on a screen or playing games, which causes tension in the relationship (Liu et al., 2012).

Parents who are overly focused on the relationship with their children can cause an unexpected stress and strain on the relationship with their children (Schimmenti et al., 2014; Xiuqin et al., 2010). While the parents mean well, it is inadvertently having a negative impact on the relationship with their children. The parental relationship can be a protective factor in preventing their children's video game addictions when they educate and set appropriate boundaries around video game playing (Schneider et al., 2017). When parents set rules around the limits of gaming, they have children who are less likely to be addicted to gaming and have less stressful relationships (Smith et al., 2015).

### **Attachment Theory**

When examining the Attachment Theory and how it ties into family dynamics, there are three pieces of the theory to examine, and that is of (a) trust, (b) communication, and (c) alienation. These three pieces are defined by Guarnieri et al. (2010), trust is how much a child trusts their parents understanding and respect their needs, communication is when the child believes the parent understands their emotional state and knows how much or little to use verbal communication with them, and alienation as the child feeling anger or isolation experiences in the attachment relationships with the parents.

The three pieces that work within one another or independent to make different attachment personality types were discussed by Pace et al. (2011) and Andretta et al. (2017). Pace et al. (2011) defined these personality types as being secure (when attachment is positive in communication, trust, and alienation), insecure-avoidant (trust and communication are low, alienation is high), and insecure-ambivalent (trust is low, communication and alienation are high). Teenagers use attachment pieces in combination

of one another but security and how teens use trust, communication, and alienation pieces on if they feel different levels of security to their parents (Andretta et al., 2017). When teens report higher levels of security in their relationships, they are setup for more emotional, social, and academic success (Andretta et al., 2017). These three concepts are explored in different studies and can help explain aspects of the struggles in the family when there is an addiction to playing video games.

The three pieces of trust, communication, and alienation are the parental behaviors that can possibly encourage their children's video game addictions (King & Delfabbrio, 2017). When children are dependent on their parents for video game related things, they trust that their parents will continue to buy them those things (King & Delfabbrio, 2017). When a parent decides to no longer supply these means, the trust is violated, and the child may feel alienation where they will play games excessively out of resentment. (King and Delfabbrio, 2017). Children who were excessively playing video games had poorer communication with their parents, which was cause for stress between parent and child (King & Delfabbrio, 2017).

Communication among children and their parents have been examined when having reported excessive video game use. What was noticed is that when parents had inconsistent behaviors with their communication to their children about their video game use it would lead to children being more inclined to spending time playing video games (Liu et al., 2012). There is stressed importance of consistency in not only verbal communication but behavioral observations as well and that parents should not rely on a do as I say, not as I do, mentality (Liu et al., 2012).



There is also an alienation aspect of video game addictions and the rifts that it can cause in the family relationship (Richards et al., 2010). Adolescents who reported having a poor attachment to their parents would spend more time isolating themselves to avoid having to spend time with their family (Richards et al., 2010). When exhibiting these alienating behaviors, adolescents were more likely to seek out peers and relationships from a digital standpoint because they felt they had better communication (Richards et al., 2010).

When children reported having a good level of trust and communication with their parents, they also reported alienating themselves from family to play games and spend time on the internet (Yusef et al., 2014). Yusef et al. (2014) surveyed 387 children ages 9 to 16 on their perceptions of their relationships with their parents along with how much time they spent playing games or using the internet. The children felt they could go to their parents for help and support if needed, but that parents were rather disengaged and did not set many limits around games (Yusef et al., 2014). According to Yusef et al. (2014) not all three pieces of attachment need to be violated for there to be a risk developing an addiction to playing games. While the research has been done on the negative impact of video game addiction and family relations, there have been studies done showing where video games can provide families positive ways of interacting.

### **Positives of Playing Video Games**

Video game use in moderation has been studied to help promote appropriate social interactions as well as having educational impacts as well. Some of the previous

studies such as (Smith et al., 2015) had authors that reported how families could use games as a means of trying to promote healthy relationships among parents and children.

When using prosocially designed video games with college undergraduates, the students reported being more socially engaged with other students in their class that also played prosocial games (Gentile et al., 2009). Because of the nature of these games the students were supported in learning through the General Learning Model (Gentile et al., 2009). Children who played socially motivating video games exhibited more appropriate social skills and that video game playing could be used as a social support (Gentile et al., 2009; Wang & Wang, 2013).

There is also discussion that video game use in moderation with children playing together could help encourage positive social interactions and team building (Granic et al., 2014). When children encounter difficult tasks in video games and solve them, they gain confidence and coping skills (Granic et al., 2014). The medical field is also using video games as a means of educating their students. The medical community is using game-based surgeries to help teach students about different medical procedures. (Granic et al., 2014).

There are also studies conducted looking at some of the social benefits of video game playing and school aged children (Straker et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2018). Straker et al. (2014) supported what Smith et al. (2015) studied in that families could use video game time with their children to build positive relationships. Family cohesiveness increased when families would make the time to play video games as a regular activity,

and that families with poor communication that utilized playing video games showed an increase in their communication skills (Wang et al., 2018).

### **Summary**

This literature review showed that excessive video game use can lead to negative consequences for children. There are first the observed struggles that the individual can experience in areas of mental, physical, and emotional health. Next, it is the risk of the video game addiction having a negative impact on the vocational or school life of the person that is addicted, causing poor school performance. There are also several individual and family traits that can put an individual at risk for developing an addiction to video games, such as having family members that have addiction struggles or relying only on video games for socialization. The experienced attachment that a child has with their family can either encourage or discourage video game addiction, but the attachment pieces can be influenced by the parents. Lastly, while video games can possibly put children at risk for developing an addiction, there are also some benefits to playing games, such as family relationship building, social skill building, and educational enhancements. In the next chapter, the rationale and design choice for this study is described.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore how parents describe family dynamics when their children use video games excessively. I also aimed to understand what strategies parents use to limit or change their children's excessive video game practices. Results of this study have the potential to help clinicians understand how excessive video game use can impact family functioning and how to develop therapeutic interventions to work with families on these issues.

This chapter includes a discussion of the generic approach that I used in this study and the reason I selected this methodology to address the study's objectives. This chapter includes an overview of the targeted participants and how I selected them for the study, along with descriptions of how I collected and analyzed data. I also discuss how I tried to minimize ethical violations and the procedures I used to ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

#### **Research Design and Rationale**

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: How do parents describe family relations when having children engaging in excessive video game use?

RQ2: What strategies do parents use to limit or change their children's excessive video game usage?

The topic under study is family dynamics in the context of children's excessive video game use. Family dynamics refers to the parent and child relationship and covers interaction aspects such as communication, alienation, and trust (King & Delfabbro,

2016). Excessive video game use refers to the preoccupation with wanting to play video games, a tolerance for playing for long periods of time, disruptions in family or school relationships, poor school performance, lying, disregard for consequences for playing, and sneaking in time to play games (Turner et al., 2012).

I used a generic qualitative approach to address the research questions in this study. Qualitative research is appropriate for exploring the reported dynamics of a family according to parents who feel their child or children engage excessively in video games. I chose to use the generic approach for this study because it is well-suited for exploring original perspectives while also examining the research problem. The generic qualitative design is useful for examining original perspectives while also exploring a specific research problem (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Percy et al., 2015). Generic qualitative studies have also been described as being meaningful in a socially constructive way of how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and how they attribute their experiences to their world (Merriam, 2009). Because of this strength, I chose the generic qualitative approach for this study.

The generic approach is also useful for exploring new research questions, advancing methodologies, and advancing new theories (Kahlke, 2014). The generic approach can be used by an attentive interviewer to create transparent interpretations, thus increasing the credibility of the findings. The generic approach is also adaptable and in line with trying to explore the experiences of parents and their perceptions of their children's excessive video game use (Percy et al., 2015). Kahlke (2014) also described the generic approach compatible with other established methodologies and that a

researcher using a generic approach can draw from a variety of influences. For these reasons, I used the generic approach to explore parents' strategies for dealing with children who engage in excessive video game use and the experiences of those parents in the context of their family dynamics,

### **Role of the Researcher**

I conducted face-to-face interviews with participants in a neutral and private location. If participants were not able to meet face-to-face, I interviewed them using the Zoom video platform. Following each interview, I secured notes, interview sheets, and other confidential participant information in a locked file cabinet in my home. I was transparent and honest to build positive rapport with each participant. Building rapport with participants was to reassure them that their participation in the study was to remain confidential throughout the course of the study and after the study has concluded. Finally, participants in this study received a \$10.00 Target gift card as a token of appreciation for their time during the interview.

### **Methodology**

#### **Participant Selection**

To participate in this study, individuals must have met the following criteria. They must be a parent of a child, or children, between ages 8 and 17, who use video games excessively. Excessive video game use is defined as (a) playing video games every day, (b) spending more than 4 hours a day playing video games, (c) having the inability to stop playing on their own accord, (d) frequent disregard of rules around playing video games, and (e) choosing to play video games rather than engage socially with peers.

Participants also needed to have reported difficulties in the parent–child relationship due to their child’s excessive video game use.

### **Sampling Procedures**

For this study, I used criterion sampling to select the cases most appropriate for participation. Patton (2001) defined criteria sampling as choosing participants who are information rich and could reveal weaknesses in a system that could be improved. This was applicable to this study because my goal was to gain information from the family perspective regarding excessive video game use in children, rather than only examining the perspective of the child. I also used snowball sampling to acquire participants; I asked participants in the study to forward information about this study to other potential participants.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

I first obtained approval from the Walden University IRB to proceed with the study. Then I began to reach out to other clinicians via social media sites to inquire if they would be comfortable with posting a flyer for my study in their lobby or office. I then gave clients a copy of my study flyer and my contact information. If permission was given from shop owners, I posted flyers at the local gaming stores, and potential participants could contact me via phone or email and I would screen if they met the criteria for participation. Interested participants who met the criteria for participation through the screening process were sent the informed consent form via email before the interview. Participants had the option of signing the consent form or replying that they gave consent in their email response. After there were 10–12 participants initially who

met the requirements, participants continued to be selected until saturation was met by no longer having new thematic data. Participants were invited to schedule a meeting time for either in person interviews or through a Zoom digital meeting. When the interviews were finished, participants were sent an email thanking them for their participation. When the study was concluded, participants were also provided with the research findings in a two-page summary with results that was emailed to them.

### ***Informed Consent***

When I gathered participants for the study, I sent an encrypted email of an informed consent form to all participants. I drafted the informed consent with the ethical considerations of the APA as well as the IRB of Walden University. The study participants had the opportunity to go over the documents with me during the first meeting, and when there was a full understanding of the study, participants gave written consent to participate. I scanned these physical documents and kept them on a thumb drive and in a locked in a file cabinet in my office. Participants of the study also had the option of requesting a photocopied or emailed version of their paperwork should they want to review it or ask questions at another time.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

I gathered the data for this study using semistructured interviews that lasted on average 45 to 60 minutes. The sample size that would be appropriate for this study was 10 to 12 participants to start and then interviews would continue to happen until saturation was reached when there was no longer any new thematic information or codes. The interviews took place in a private room at a local library. I did not conduct more than



two or three interviews a day to allow adequate time to code the information and take any additional notes needed. The preferred method of conducting the interviews was face-to-face format; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I also offered participants the opportunity to use private webcam-based interviews through an application such as Zoom. I transcribed the data during either face-to-face interviews or webcam interviews, and I informed the participants that this was the procedural note process for interviewing.

## **Instrumentation**

### ***Demographic Information***

Each participant was expected to be interviewed for approximately 45 minutes to an hour to ensure that all necessary information needed was obtained. Before asking participants questions related to the research study and the specific interview guide, I began by asking them a set of demographic questions to get a clear picture of participants and their context and to gain rapport that was open and honest.

### **Semistructured Interview**

Data collection for this study was done through semistructured in-person or virtual interviews. These interviews served as a means to collect rich and personal information that families are experiencing on a daily basis due to their child's reported excessive video game use. Semistructured interviews also allow for personal interactions and to build a rapport between participant and interviewer (Kahlke, 2014).

Previously completed studies on children and excessive video game use have been quantitative in nature, and researchers sent out surveys for data collection. Many of the authors of those studies suggested that further data could be collected from the

parents of those children regarding how the excessive use of video games impacts the household. The use of semistructured interviews aimed to build from these suggestions and accomplish something that has not been studied in this area of interest. Gaining the perspectives of parents through their expression of the information and having the opportunity to discuss that information would help close the gap in the literature. The semistructured interviews were important in allowing parents to take ownership of their experiences and to freely discuss how excessive video game use impacts their family structure. This information was then built into positive empirical findings.

### **Data Analysis**

The interesting part of conducting qualitative research is that a researcher has more direct contact and is actively involved in the study taking place. Azungah (2018) discussed that while many may find qualitative research to be difficult and drawn out, there can be processes that make analyzing the data easier. Thomas (2006) stated that inductive analysis in a qualitative study is going through each line of the interview and drawing themes from the interview and assigning codes that will hope to answer the research questions.

When analyzing the data, I first relistened to the recorded interview to return to the mindset of being in that interview. I then listened to it again with the notes I had made during the interview and listened for any additional codes. Lastly, I looked through my notes again and tried to find connections that could possibly be made. I then shared these pieces of data and information with my dissertation committee chair to work on finding themes or codes that possibly were missed during my review process. Once there were

clear themes in the data, they were analyzed to see if there were connections in terms of strength and repetition; other themes that were once thought to be useful may then become discarded. Data analysis was manually coded.

Braun and Clarke (2006) described six different steps to analyzing qualitative data and how to develop the themes and analyzing those. The first is becoming familiar with the data, in which Braun and Clarke (2006) talked about going through the recorded data and reading it multiple times and becoming familiar with it and then noting down any initial thoughts. The second phase is going through and creating the initial codes found during multiple reviews of the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) discussed that codes are anything that arise as an interest to the researcher. Once this is completed, it is time to move to the third step.

Braun and Clarke (2006) noted that the third step of data analysis is searching for themes. The first thematic map is outlined highlighting major trends that emerge from the data. This is the time in which data themes are created to be explored. The theme review process is the fourth step in which Braun and Clarke (2006) talked about if the themes work within the coded extracts from the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) noted that during this time the themes will form a map and start to show if themes are really themes or if there just is simply not enough data to support those themes. After these maps are created, it is time to move to the fifth step to focus on the analysis.

Braun and Clarke (2006) described defining and naming of themes as refining the specifics of each theme and the story it tells. This helps generate a clear definition of each theme before the final process of data analysis. The final step, as described by Braun and

Clarke (2006), is writing the report. This involves the selection of important extract examples, analysis of those examples, and producing a scholarly report through the analysis of those examples (Braun & Clark, 2006). In the final report, the most prominent themes are reported and discussed as a means of showing the interpretation of the data.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

A research study regardless of being qualitative or quantitative should show aspects of being a trustworthy study. To ensure quality in a qualitative study, the study should be credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 2005). A trustworthy qualitative study is one that encourages researchers to reflect on what they have learned as well as how they have grown from the study that they had just completed.

### **Credibility**

Credibility described by Korstjens and Moser (2018) is similar to a quantitative study in that it is internally valid. When establishing credibility in a qualitative study Korstjens and Moser (2018) discussed strategies to ensure credibility are prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, and member check. When applying these concepts to my study, I planned to use all of them to help build a credible study. Prolonged engagement noted by Korstjens and Moser (2018) is when the researcher spends a significant amount of time with the study and the data to develop an understanding and immersing themselves in the information as much as possible. For the purposes here, this helped me in being able to have the most understanding of the data in trying to build the themes and codes.

Persistent observations described by Korstjens and Moser (2018) is when the researcher makes note of the important themes to help answer the research questions. This piece helps weed out what is the important themes compared to the not important themes. Triangulation of the data can happen in different ways, but as described by Korstjens and Moser (2018) can happen when doing the study at a different time of day, using multiple test sites or researchers, as well as different methods of collecting the data. Due to the nature and access of this study, the main form of triangulation here was interviewing participants at different times of the day, ranging from morning to evening hours.

### **Transferability**

The concept of transferability is that of one in which the data and descriptions are given to allow replication of the study in a different setting (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The goal for the proposed study was to be as easily replicated as possible for future researchers. The ways of achieving a transferable study were done in several ways. The first step is to have a clear description of the sample group, the size, and the strategy for acquiring that group. Secondly, the setting and location of the study were explained as well as the amount of time it took to conduct the interview.

The next step was outlining and having a copy of the interview questions that were asked during the interview and to explain how the coding and theme making process is done. This then was transferred over to an explanation of how I got the codes and themes. Lastly, when there were follow up questions and interviews those examples will be provided in the study write up.

## **Confirmability**

Confirmability described by Korstjens and Moser (2018) is when a researcher or team audits their study to ensure that their own biases are not getting in the way of the data. This audit is meant to provide assurance that the data has been gathered appropriately and accurately reported on by the participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The confirmability audit will also be demonstrated in several steps through this dissertation study.

The first part of the audit came from showing the notes that are taken during the study and any personal comments or additions. Then an explanation of those notes and why they were chosen to aid in follow up questions, creations of coding and themes, or just on my observations. The other part was providing additional explanations about why certain source materials were chosen or any other resources so that readers can have a clear idea about what the start to finish process was for this study.

Lastly, as part of the audit, Korstjens and Moser (2018) suggested that someone who is not directly involved with the study look through the notes and other data to ensure that there is transparency, and that bias is not coming out. I called upon my dissertation committee members to help audit my findings to ensure that there has been every possible step taken to not have personal feelings get in the way of reporting on the data. Through these thorough steps, the study and report that I am conducted should provide an objective understanding to the research questions that are being asked.

**Reflexivity**

Reflexivity, which Korstjens and Moser (2018) noted as when the qualitative researcher is being reflexive in their role and providing notes on that piece with their study. Korstjens and Moser (2018) suggested that the researcher keep notes and document their feelings and thoughts during different parts of the data collecting and analyzing phase of the study. I kept a journal to go along with my study to discuss how I was feeling about the process and to make note of the types of feelings I had about the data that was being presented as well as feelings about the information received. The overall goal was to continue to remain unbiased to keep myself on track with doing the study effectively.

**Ethical Considerations**

The most important piece to conducting any type of research is that there is no harm done to the participants of the study (Kahlke, 2014). This mantra of not intentionally or unintentionally causing any harm to study participants is at the core value of what I am not only creating this study out of, but a foundation of the profession's ethics code. With that considered, there was minimal risk for any type of physical harm to be done in this study, especially if being done via webcam and the participant was at home.

There was however the potential for emotional or mental disturbances to arise. Parents were going to be going through the discussion of their perceptions of how their child or children's video game addiction is having an impact on the family dynamics. This could possibly have led to responses of stress or frustration or even possibly other

issues that the parents do not feel supported on. Should the need have arose at the student researcher's discretion, family counseling services and crisis phone line numbers were provided if needed.

There was also a detailed informed consent page that was be provided to each participant in the study and was reviewed before the first interview so that each participant had a clear understanding of what to expect as part of the interview as well as potential emotional responses that may arise. I also had the referral and crisis line information provided in the informed consent page for the participants. I also intended to remind them that even though I am a working professional in the community, the objective of the interview was strictly to gain information and to not be a therapeutic service.

Ethical considerations for this study were also adhered to as part of the dissertation committee as well as Walden University's IRB. The entire study, interview questions, data analysis, and processing was submitted for approval for any missed ethical problems that could arise. Until approval had been made by both the committee members and the IRB, no recruitment was done, but instead there was a focus on template creation, interview questions, and getting other necessary pieces in order to conduct the study in an efficient manner.

### **Potential Research Bias**

My education and professional background may have led to me having a close relationship to the topic that is being explored as part of this study. Running my own therapy practice with a background in working with kids and teenagers, I am already



seeing clients that had their struggles with managing time in playing video games and how having extended time away from those games can cause adverse reactions.

I too also had been a long-time player of different video games through my youth and into adulthood and understand that these games can be a great way for engaging in entertainment or problem-solving abilities. The addiction and behavioral piece of video games has become more of a focus on parental concerns over the years at my practice. Journaling constantly through this dissertation process helped in keeping my own emotions in check as well as adding to the reflexivity piece of my study. I also checked in with my committee members often if I felt like I was getting into a potential bias.

### **Summary**

This chapter discussed the qualitative nature of this study as well as the reasoning for using a generic and semi-structured interview approach. The reasoning for this approach was outlined as being the best fit to allow participants to be able to speak freely about their experiences while also providing rich data to go from. Data collection and analysis processes are explored with the explanation of how the data will be interpreted for clear and accurate reporting on what was gathered during the interviews. Finally, my role as a researcher in this study was explained to demonstrate the understanding of how data would be interpreted as well as calling to attention any possible ethical or biases that may arise before, during, and after the conclusion of this study. The following chapter will focus on the study's findings and outcomes.

## Chapter 4: Results

This qualitative study was conducted to explore how parents describe family dynamics when their children use video games excessively. I also aimed to understand what strategies parents use to limit or change their children's excessive video game practices. In the United States, video game playing is a common activity that many individuals engage in as a hobby or to socially connect with others. However, there has been a recent surge in individuals, especially children and teenagers, letting their video game habits negatively impact their lives (Choi et al., 2018). I wanted to further explore the family dynamics as described by parents who report their children are engaging in excessive video game use. To do this, the following research questions were explored:

RQ1: How do parents describe family relations when having children engaging in excessive video game use?

RQ2: What strategies do parents use to limit or change their children's excessive video game use?

### **Setting**

The initial recruitment phase of this study began with a posting in the Walden University Participant Pool, where interested participants could send an email to receive more information. There were also postings made in licensed therapist groups on Facebook seeking participants, as well as flyers distributed to therapist and psychologist colleagues. Participant recruitment primarily focused on a large metropolitan area in the Midwest but was also extended nationally through the participant pool at Walden University.

### Demographics

A total of 12 people were interviewed for this study in 11 interviews, representing diverse genders and cultural backgrounds. Most participants reported living in the United States ( $n = 11$ ), with one participant living on an Air Force base in Japan. The participants included men ( $n = 4$ ), women ( $n = 8$ ), and one interview involved both a mother and father. Reported marital statuses were divorced ( $n = 8$ ) and married or together ( $n = 4$ ). The participants' racial backgrounds were Black ( $n = 3$ ), Indian ( $n = 1$ ), and White ( $n = 8$ ). The children discussed in the interviews were ages 5–10 ( $n = 6$ ), 11–15 ( $n = 4$ ), and 16+ ( $n = 2$ ). Table 1 depicts more specific participant demographic information. Participant 1A (P1A) and Participant 1B (P1B) represent a couple interviewed together. They were kept as connected participants because they described the same family context.

**Table 1***Participants' Demographics*

Participant	Age	Ethnicity	Gender	Number of children	Ages of children in household	Age of child playing video games	Gender of child playing video games	Hours spent playing video games daily	Family members who live with the child
P1A	40	Indian	Male	2	7, 8	8	Male	2	Mom, dad, and sister
P1B	37	Indian	Female	2	7, 8	8	Male	2	Mom, dad, and sister
P2	35	White	Female	4	14, 9, 6, 4	14	Male	4–8	Mom and siblings, divorced split house
P3	34	Black	Female	3	12, 5, 1	12	Male	10	Mom, dad, and brothers
P4	42	White	Female	3	17, 15, 13	13	Male	5–10	Mom and siblings
P5	42	White	Female	3	15, 12, 8	8	Male	5	Mom, dad, and siblings
P6	35	White	Female	3	20, 9, 9	9	Female	5	Mom and dad
P7	31	Black	Female	2	13, 3	13	Male	11	Mom, dad, brother
P8	30	Black	Female	2	14, 17	17	Male	4	Mom and brother
P9	35	White	Male	1	12	12	Male	5	Dad and mom split
P10	41	White	Male	2	11, 9	11	Male	4	Dad, mom, and brother
P11	33	White	Male	2	6, 11 months	6	Female	4	Mom, dad, and sibling

### **Data Collection**

Participants for this study were given the opportunity to meet in person if they were close to my location or via a private Zoom meeting. All participants opted to meet via Zoom for convenience and ease of scheduling. An interview guide was used to gather participants' opinions. The purpose of this guide was to help maintain the flow of the interview and provide a structure for gathering information focused on the research questions. This guide also helped ensure consistency by having each participant asked the same questions, thereby maintaining the integrity of the study.

The interview process was conducted in a manner that allowed participants to have a safe and open space to express themselves and their experiences. I made sure to be prompt and on time for scheduled meetings to help maintain a professional experience for the participants. I ensured a warm and welcoming demeanor so participants felt they could trust that I was being respectful of their experiences. After the Zoom interviews were recorded, the audio files were saved and transcribed using Microsoft Word. Through this transcription process, I was able to continually reference the information gathered to analyze the data and identify themes. Data were then transferred to a matrix to find connections among participants' answers. Interviews lasted, on average, an hour.

### **Data Analysis**

To complete the analysis, I followed the approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The first step was to listen to the interviews to familiarize myself with the discussions and content. I then read through the interview transcripts, began the coding process, and added the codes to a participant matrix. Consistent updates on the coding

and participant matrix were provided to my dissertation committee chair for support and guidance.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step process of qualitative data analysis was followed throughout this part of the study. After familiarizing myself with the data and generating initial codes, I proceeded to step three, which involves identifying themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), this step is about finding major trends among the codes or data. The fourth step involves determining whether the themes form a coherent map of information and work together or if there is insufficient data to support them.

Once the maps were created, I moved on to the fifth step, which involves defining and naming the themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) described this step as refining the specifics of each theme and the story it tells. This helps clarify the meaning of each theme and the narrative it conveys. The participant matrix facilitated the organization of these themes, with color coding used to distinguish where each theme fit on the map. Finally, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), the sixth step is to write the report and interpret the data. Examples of coding information can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Sample of Coding*

Raw data	Line-by-line coding	Focused coding
Taking that away from him, I feel we just make him more angry. Especially with the situation.	Removing him from playing games makes him angry.	Angry when having to stop playing games. Stopping causes anger.
That boy is not going to miss a meal because of the game. He will eat the meal with the game.	Has not missed a meal or anything due to gaming but will eat and play games at the same time.	Will do things in conjunction to gaming like eating food. Eats while gaming.

The next step in the data analysis was to find the themes among the focused codes and to start identifying relationships among the themes. This process involved taking all the focused codes and definitions and adding them to a large participant matrix, where information from all participants was placed side by side in a document. Color coding was used to identify these themes within the focused codes to allow for ease of access when consolidating the information. This process then led to the cross-case analysis portion of the data analysis. Table 3 gives an example of the matrix and cross-case analysis.

**Table 3**

*Cross Case Analysis Example*

Category	Focused coding	Cross case analysis
Psychological and behavioral observations around use of media	<p>First person shooting aggression: Code is discussing how parent notices that when child plays first-person shooting games it tends to bring on aggression more than other games.</p> <p>Games affect mood: Code discusses that participant has observed that losses or struggles in games can have a negative impact on kids' moods.</p> <p>Stopping causes anger: This code refers to how having to stop playing games will cause child to become angry.</p>	Anger, aggression or negative behaviors displayed at using video games

Once the cross-case analysis was completed, the next step was to take the information and identify the themes that emerged from the cross-case analysis. This process involved taking all the color-coded, cross-case analysis pieces in a new

document, finding the common themes among them, and categorizing them. For example, one frequently occurring behavioral and psychological theme was anger. Examining the information in all the cross-case analysis themes, common occurrences of anger included reactions to having to stop playing video games and anger toward other people. This process was then repeated for the other cross-case analysis themes.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness was discussed previously in Chapter 3, emphasizing that a qualitative study should be credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 2005). To further enhance the trustworthiness of this study, I adhered to the research guidelines expected by Walden University. I was also transparent with the participants about how the information would be used and analyzed.

### **Credibility**

Credibility is considered the qualitative equivalent of internal validity used in a quantitative study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 2005). To ensure the findings accurately represent reality, I employed a combination of strategies, including extensive interviews, prolonged engagement, and debriefing. My in-depth interview sessions, which lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, were designed to allow participants ample time to fully express their responses. Participants were not compelled to stay for the entire duration but were encouraged to share their thoughts comprehensively. Prolonged engagement involved spending sufficient time in the field to thoroughly understand the phenomenon within its context. I conducted a total of 12 interviews to achieve data saturation.



**Transferability**

Transferability involves the applicability of a study's findings to other similar settings. Achieving transferability requires the researcher to provide a detailed and thorough description of the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The goal is for future researchers to follow the same steps to conduct a similar study.

Transferability for this study was achieved by providing the ages of the children being interviewed, detailing the source of the sample population, and specifying the age range of children in the interviewed families. Additionally, data and excerpts from participant interviews are included to help future researchers replicate the study, enhancing the potential for transferability. The information provided as a result of this study will hopefully enable readers and researchers to determine its validity.

**Confirmability**

Confirmability parallels the concept of objectivity in quantitative research. It was achieved by ensuring that the study's findings accurately reflected the participants' responses rather than the researcher's subjective biases and interpretations. To enhance confirmability, I implemented a reflexivity process (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This helped me closely monitor and manage my feelings during the data collection and analysis phases of the study. Journaling, a self-care practice I usually follow, was incorporated to document the study process and data collection tasks. Finding participants was sometimes challenging, but maintaining my journal and communicating with my committee member via email supported the reflexive process and kept me motivated to

continue working on the study. This practice also helped me manage any negative feelings experienced during extended periods without active participants.

Korstjens and Moser (2018) encouraged researchers to perform an audit of their data to ensure that their bias was minimized. The audit involved examining notes taken during the interviews and assessing them for any feelings or judgments. Once these pieces were reviewed and determined to be free of bias, the transcription and coding process began. The next part of this audit process, as described in Chapter 3, involved having an external reviewer examine any notes, coding, and cross-analysis to ensure the data was accurate and consistent. After completing interviews, I sent my transcriptions and coding information to my committee member for review before proceeding to cross-case analysis. After completing the cross-case analysis, I also sent that information to my committee member for review.

### **Dependability**

Dependability pertains to the consistency and reliability of research procedures. Ensuring consistency, stability, and transparency was crucial so that replicating the study with the same context, participants, and methods would yield similar findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To achieve dependability in my study, I thoroughly described the planning phase, detailed the data gathering process, and reflected on the overall research process. Implementing an audit trail helped establish rigor in this qualitative study. An audit trail enables readers to follow the research step-by-step through documented decisions and procedures (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I utilized an audit trail and included my field

notes, interviews, reflexive journaling, and a detailed data analysis procedure. This approach also allowed me to meticulously track my research procedures and processes.

### Results

Four themes were generated from the data analysis. The first theme related to moods observed in children as a result of playing video games. The main mood described was anger; participants reported their child or children becoming angry when having to stop playing games or directing anger toward other people. The second theme was that families noted their children using games for socialization purposes. The third theme related to family functioning, with topics related to children avoiding family time to play games and parents supporting one another in their parenting around gaming. The fourth theme was that families reported various strategies for decreasing their children's gaming time.

**Table 4**

*Cross Case Analysis Themes and Subthemes*

Theme	Subtheme
Theme 1: Moods and behaviors related to playing video games	Displaying anger Getting physically exhausted Child experiences social and school difficulties
Theme 2: Socialization within playing video games	Socialization with friends and family Challenges of social interactions focused on playing video games
Theme 3: Family functioning and children's gaming habits	None
Theme 4: Strategies to decrease gaming time	Decrease playing time during school year Game time is earned by completing chores or doing well in school

**Theme 1: Moods and Behaviors Related to Playing Video Games**

This theme relates to how participants described the moods and behaviors they observed in their children around playing video games. It also relates to how parents observe social and school difficulties related to playing excessive video games. The main mood participants mostly described was anger, and a relevant behavior observed was physical exhaustion and problems with school assignment completion and socialization.

***Displaying Anger***

One of the most common occurrences of information that was gathered was that most respondents answered their children would get quite angry when having to stop or move away from playing video games. Participants also reported that they would observe their children also getting angry while they played video games. This anger would be displayed as either verbal outbursts, tantrums, or possibly physical anger toward objects around the house or toward other people. Families also noted that children were observed getting angry while playing games when they were either perceiving that they were losing or not playing up to their own standards. P8 indicated, "Taking that away from him, I feel we just make him more angry. Especially with the situation." P3 stated, "You could see it through his behaviors, like he's much more aggressive or. He doesn't know how to stop like, even when the timer goes up." And P9 related the anger with routine, "I think probably the most difficult thing is just to disruption in routine."

Participants observed that their children not only displayed anger when having to stop playing video games, but they also displayed anger toward others. This usually meant that the child would be angry toward parents who had requested them to turn off

their games. There were other reported times that children would focus their anger toward siblings and would yell at them or become physically aggressive toward them when having to disengage from video game use. Some parents also reported that the child who engaged in excessive game playing would also get quite angry toward their siblings if they were playing together and the sibling did something perceived as inappropriate or that would cause them to have a setback. P5 indicated, “get irritated with and fight with his younger brother.” And P2 indicated “there was that period of time where it just wasn’t working out and he was just acting very like. Defiant almost you. Know like talking back to us a lot like not listening.” P7 felt that “the longer he spends playing video games and then having to stop playing will cause him to get angry. The longer the time spent playing the more intense the anger can be.”

### ***Getting Physically Exhausted***

While anger was a commonly reported emotional reaction among many participants in this study, other parents noted that when their children played video games excessively, they would observe other behaviors in school and social functioning, as well as physical signs that their children had been playing games for far too long. Participants observed that their children would play games so much to the point of being physically exhausted. This could range from falling asleep while playing games, having a “drained” look on their face, or that it would cause them to be lethargic in their activity during the rest of their day. P7 indicated, “He’s so much more exhausted from staying up, so to playing the video games at night.”

Many parents reported some of their frustrations with their children losing interest in games at what they felt was too fast of a pace. This would lead to things like complaining about being bored with playing games, getting frustrated with the game itself, or that they would constantly ask for a new game so they could have something different to play. P5 indicated “when they don’t have a bunch of money to buy the looks and the skins and all that stuff, the interest goes down just a little bit” and “I would say is a little bit more of his body shutting down where he’ll fall asleep.”

In addition to emotional reactions and physical exhaustion, participants observed their children breaking the rules of the house, like not doing chores or homework and going to playing games. Some families also reported that they would experience their child sneaking games during the middle of the night when others went to bed. P5 stated, “His computer is in there, so he gets into a whole different level of trouble for being dishonest.” And P1B expressed, “So anytime like he would get in trouble for not doing his chores or something, I would take something away and he would, like, sneak in my room to get the controller to find it.”

### ***Child Experiences Social and School Difficulties***

This subtheme is reflecting on parents who also report that while their children may have some social outlets due to gaming, but they also have observed social struggles due to playing games too much. These struggles may center around not being able to talk to other kids about other interests like books, sports, or movies and that even the types of games kids play could lead to being ridiculed if perceived as being something “not cool” or not what is the most popular among their peer group. P7 indicated, “His friends use

devices more than him and he is frequently trying to compare and get more time.” P5 stated, “He feels left out because they’re all still, I don’t know, doing it or building or whatever they’re doing.” The observations by P8 were: “He really only talks extensively or gets excited about socializing when others are talking about playing video games.”

There is also the struggle of their kids playing too much after school and it has an impact on their school performance. Missing or not completing homework came up among several participants and also poor grades on tests due to not studying also came up for some parents of older children. P3 recounted, “Not necessarily missed anything, but like not turned in his homework on time, or you know, like told us that he. Was in fact. Doing some work on a major project, when in fact he wasn’t.” And P9 stated, “I say the homework is probably the biggest. If they don’t do it, then you know that’s the consequence and they have to make it up going forward.”

## **Theme 2: Socialization Within Playing Video Games**

This theme is defined as parents who observe or recognize that their children gain social interactions with peers or even other family members through playing video games. There are though some concerns with these social interactions from parents on what is the level of appropriateness that is happening during these interactions and that they also have their worries that talking about video games seems to be the only way in which they are trying to socialize with other people.

### ***Socialization With Friends and Family***

This subtheme is being defined as how families report that they observe their children playing games with their friends, either in the same room as them or through

online connections, as well as with other family members, like parents and siblings. Some families also reported that they found these interactions to be positive with family members and could acknowledge the social benefits to playing video games. Participants described that children would play more with fathers or male figures, but also with siblings.

Participants noted that when observed many of their children would spend time playing games with either their dad or a male figure in their lives. Mothers would also join in playing games but noted that it came with some interest or frustration in not knowing much about the games themselves. P7 stated that “his father understands that he needs a crutch, something to keep him entertained and distracted.” Similarly, P7 noted “I wanted to get him into the sports games, and he’ll play that every once in a while. Like if he’s playing against his uncle, he will join him in playing a sports specific game.” Also, P9 mentioned, “I like to join him in playing games at times, when it is something we have a shared interest in it can be a lot of fun.” P10 also enjoys playing games with his kids “I will join them in games that I grew up with that there are now more modern versions of—things like Mario Kart or Zelda.”

Families reported that they would observe their child who would engage in excessive gaming would also spend time playing games with their siblings if asked. As noted earlier sometimes these moments in playing together though would sometimes lead to their being angry outbursts. P5 stated, “Sisters will play Mario Kart with him during cold or rainy weather, and it goes well until there is a disagreement.” P2 discussed “They’ll play, yeah, like I’ll scream they will play together, but it’s almost like he can



only tolerate it so much.” Lastly, P1A talked about how the boys rarely play games together unless someone gets a new game. Then there is a short duration of interest with one another.

### ***Challenges of Social Interactions Focused on Playing Video Games***

Some respondents would recognize that they felt some of their children only got social interactions through playing video games or that because of how society is now that gaming is one of the more common or popular ways for kids and teenagers to socialize with others. While many parents could recognize some of the positives in socialization in playing games, there were many reported concerns about what type of social interactions were taking place. A range of concerns emerged including safety, socialization focused only on playing video games, and their children spending money on video games. Participants felt that they were more comfortable in knowing what types of games their children are playing and who they are playing with so they can have a better understanding on how some of the games work and where there may be possible interactions with other plays.

Parents reported concerns about how they had to take the time to know which games their kids are playing so as to monitor content or not get charged money on a credit card for unauthorized transactions. P8 expressed how she talks to her child about safety “I’m like, would you be comfortable with your younger sister talking to random people on the Internet playing games?” Similarly, P2 shared concerns about her child being taken advantage of by saying “You know that they could be preyed upon with that, depending on their age.” P1A also shared concerns about letting their son play games

online “we only let him play with other kids he knows and we know from school or the neighborhood.”

Several parents noted they had their worries about who their children would possibly be interacting with online, especially if there was the possibility of adults or older children being able to talk to their kids. Some families reported having their concerns about their kids being bullied or manipulated by others in these social online environments. P1B stated “I don’t know who you’re talking to. I don’t know how old they are. I don’t know what they’re saying to you versus what you may be saying.” Similarly, P2 noted that “I have heard him saying inappropriate things online to others and have also witnessed him being bullied online by classmates when playing games online.”

Participants feel their children spend a lot of their time away from video games, talking about video games or asking frequently about how or when they can get back to playing their games. Families also reported that they noticed talking about games as being a way to socialize with others. Parents reported that they would observe their children talking about video games quite a bit in different social situations. These conversations could center around how they want to get back to playing games or that they were sharing their excitement about something they did in a game. P8 discussed, “Talking with him about things has been difficult in the past but joining games has allowed him to open up.” While P1A said, “They get excited when someone talks to them about their game, even if they’re not playing it now.” P9 also felt that his son tries to engage in conversation with him in gaming by saying, “oh, Dad, I got to this new level,

or I unlocked this special item or powerup in the game today.” P7 also reported that “he will get really excited to talk to another person at the salon I work at who plays video games, they share that bond with one another.”

Much like playing games with other peers being a large piece of socialization among their children, parents also observed that when their child who played games excessively was around other children, talking about video games would be the main source of conversation among them. P3 discussed the social piece of playing games saying, “you know, through those games you can talk to people live and like, play, live and stuff like that and he goes to school about half an hour away from where we live so it’s his social means.” P5 discussed how siblings will do movies and games together socially saying, “But they’ll do their game on one side of the room, but then they’ll have movie night and they’ll put on like a movie on the other side while playing games.”

### **Theme 3: Family Functioning and Children’s Gaming Habits**

This theme refers to how parents related their child’s gaming habits to family functioning. This observation of the family functioning centered around things such as the child missing certain events, having a negative attitude about family time, as well as how parents set examples for screen use. Some parents observed that their child would rather miss family outings or supporting others at sports events/hobbies and take that time to play video games instead. When being forced or encouraged to do these other things sometimes it would lead to the children’s frustration or annoyance. P6 felt that their son would “Prefer to miss important events and spend that time playing video games.”

Meanwhile, P5 described a family gathering:

The whole family is like hanging out around the house, out the front yard or whatever. And it is in Louisiana, we go visit for different holidays. He's on my computer inside playing games and not spending time with family.

Most parents observed their child, if given the option, would want to take a lot of the free time they are given and spend it playing video games. Some parents note that on weekends or other free days, their child will spend over several hours playing games and it can even be a struggle to get them to want to come out of their room to do simple things like use the bathroom or eat meals. P1B discussed how her son wants to "Just want to be by myself in my room playing games and not engaging with family." P6 was quoted as saying "he would definitely choose video games over seeing his sister at a championship softball game."

In describing family functioning and the use of video games, some parents note that their own overuse of screens, like computers, phones, and tablets, may set the example for their children to be on screens just as much. Some parents report that they feel bad about how much time they spend on their devices and their children bring that to their attention as well. P6 felt that "The hard part for me is I'm on the computer a lot and I don't feel like I can enforce some rules because you know, it's a double-edged sword like you mentioned before, where they see us working on screens all the time." P2 also shared a similar view of working on screen and their children seeing that by saying "I try really hard to, you know model that behavior for him and model we use our screens for these purposes, but like when it gets excessive, that's when we need to put it down."

#### **Theme 4: Strategies to Decrease Gaming Time**

The last theme that was generated related to strategies parents used to decrease the amount of time their children were spending playing video games. Two of the most common answers came in the subthemes of how parents would put limits on how much game time could be spent playing during the school year or that they would require their children to finish chores or homework before being allowed to play video games. Besides these strategies, it was relevant to notice that participants interviewed felt that in their home or if in a co-parenting relationship, they supported one another with the decisions on the limits set for playing games and would back one another up when enforcing those rules.

Some co-parenting families noted that there would be struggles at times where one house would have more gaming freedom, but once behaviors were seen consistency was encouraged and then observed. P5 stated that she felt like the agreement of going fine by saying “I think we’re on the same page as far as like expectations and things like that.” Participant 2 discussed the perspectives of themselves as parents by saying “For the most part, I think we both are OK with our kids doing playing video games and having interactions online with others.” P9 who co-parents his son discussed that “his mom and I have similar rules about games and encourage him to follow those rules when he is at either one of our homes and we do not try to change either one of our stances.”

#### ***Decrease of Playing Time During School Year***

Several of the family members noted that during the school year, there would be time limits placed on how much time could be spent playing video games in an effort to

try and minimize the possibility of not doing homework or studying for tests/exams. Parents also reported some successes in being able to have decreased time during the school year with the concession that their children could play longer on the weekends. P2 stated, “During school year they are allowed to play for a half an hour at most. During weekends he can play for longer than a half an hour.” P8 shared, “He’s an avid video gamer, but you know when you’re going to school in the morning and come back at night and you have assignments you need to focus on and not just playing video games.” P1B has more strict game playing guidelines in that “during the school year he is only allowed to play on the weekends and for short durations, he is not allowed to play at all during the week.”

### ***Game Time Is Earned by Completing Chores or Doing Well in School***

This subtheme reflects that some parents were willing to give more time to their children to play games if they had completed tasks or chores around the house. Some other parents also felt that their children could have extra time to play games so long as their homework was done and submitted along with having passing grades. P2 stated, “trying to shift their perspective from seeing it as like an entitlement to something that is like a privilege something that is earned.” And P8 expressed, “you’ve done your chores or you went outside and we ran a couple errands. So in my mind you can spend more time playing a game.” P10 said, “If the kids finish their chores and other tasks around the home that is satisfactory to us, then we let them get into playing their games.”

Finally, it was worth noting that while participants endorsed cutting excessive time of video game use, some participants, particularly mothers described feeling guilty

for taking away their children's games as a punishment. They would note that they know the gaming is something that brings them happiness as well as socialization with others but that there has to be boundaries set around gaming and following the rules of the house. Some parents also felt like they were being almost a bad parent by setting rules. P1B felt this way by saying "I want to teach them and show them valuable lessons about life without being the bad parent that just wants to limit them from having fun." P5 shared that same feeling by saying "I think the biggest challenge is not feeling like the bad guy, because it's just it feels like one of those things that I'm always going to be fighting against."

### **Summary**

The questions addressed were: How do parents describe family relations when having children engaging in excessive video game use? What strategies do parents use to limit or change their children's excessive video game use? Four main themes were generated to respond to these research question. The first theme emerged regarding children's moods and behaviors related to playing video games, with the primary mood described being anger. Parents reported that their children often displayed anger when asked to stop playing games, which could manifest as verbal outbursts, tantrums, or even physical aggression toward objects or people. This anger was also observed during gameplay, especially when children felt they were losing or not meeting their own expectations. Additionally, excessive gaming led to physical exhaustion, with children falling asleep while playing, appearing drained, or becoming lethargic during the day.

Parents also noted that gaming impacted their children's school performance and social interactions. Children often skipped homework, resulting in poor grades, and struggled to engage with peers on non-gaming topics. Despite these challenges, some children used gaming as a means of socialization, playing with friends and family members both online and in person, which offered some social benefits but also raised concerns about the appropriateness and safety of these interactions. The study also revealed how children's gaming habits affected family functioning and the strategies parents used to manage gaming time. Many parents observed that their children preferred playing video games over participating in family activities or events, leading to frustration and annoyance when encouraged to do otherwise. This preference was sometimes mirrored by parents' own screen usage, which set an example for their children. To mitigate excessive gaming, parents implemented strategies such as limiting gaming time during the school year and requiring children to complete chores or homework before playing.

Coparenting families often struggled with consistency between households but generally supported each other's decisions on gaming limits. While some parents felt guilty for restricting gaming, seeing it as a source of happiness and socialization for their children, they recognized the need for boundaries to maintain a balanced and healthy family dynamic.



## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Excessive video game usage has been shown to have several implications for children and their families in multiple ways. Choi et al. (2018) noted that when children and teens play games excessively, it may negatively impact their behavioral and emotional regulation. Wang and Wang (2013) also argued that when children primarily use video games as a means of social interaction, their face-to-face socialization skills may suffer because they do not know other ways of interacting. The home environment in which a child is raised may also play a role in inadvertently encouraging children to play games excessively. An inconsistent or problematic home environment may push children to seek out video games (Schneider et al., 2017). Even something as simple as having devices in their bedroom (Straker et al., 2014) may put them at greater risk of playing video games excessively.

The 12 participants in this study self-identified as parents who reported that their child engaged in excessive video game playing, which had an impact on family functioning. Interviews addressed how participating parents interpreted their experiences parenting children who played video games excessively. From the analysis of interview data, I identified four main themes. The first theme referred to the moods and observed behaviors when playing video games or transitioning off. The second theme focused on the socialization aspects of video gameplay. The third theme explored family functioning and video gaming habits. The fourth theme was about how families try to decrease children's video game use.

## **Interpretation of the Findings**

The current study's findings confirm and expand the knowledge about parents' perspectives on parenting a child who engages in excessive video game playing. Participants provided insight into different themes and shared some common aspects of their experiences. All themes that originated from this project are supported by findings in the existing literature. By comparing the findings from this study to the foundational understanding of children and excessive video game use, I hope to expand the scope of study for future clinicians.

### **Theme 1: Moods and Behaviors Related to Playing Video Games**

This theme refers to how parents observe notable outbursts of anger when their children had to stop playing video games or even during their time playing games. Participants noted that anger would be displayed in both physical and verbal outbursts and could be directed at parents or siblings. When playing games online, anger was usually directed at other players in the game. The participants' descriptions of the experience and observations of anger is consistent with the literature. For example, the anger displayed toward others while playing games online is supported by Surya et al. (2024), who also found that school children were verbally aggressive toward others they were playing with when they spent a significant amount of time playing video games.

Participants in this study noted that the longer they observed their children playing video games, the more likely they were to experience behavioral changes (Berauny et al., 2013). Turner et al. (2012) found that children who played video games excessively would demonstrate the potential for aggressive behaviors and disruptions in

the household, which was consistent with the interview responses of several participants. Parents who knew that their children played violent or aggressive video games expressed concerns about how this violent content might relate to their children's anger or outbursts. Zhang et al. (2021) found that young boys who played violent games were more likely to display physical or verbal aggression and should be monitored more as violent games increase in popularity.

This theme also reflects on participants' observations of their children and the children's difficulties with other behaviors aside from anger, as well as the impact of observed excessive video game use on their child's physical health. Parents reported that their children often showed physical health complications, such as becoming physically exhausted or missing meals to keep playing games. Sleep disruption was also mentioned by a few parents, noting that kids would stay up until the point of exhaustion. Lam (2014) and Limone et al. (2023) found this in their study about excessive gaming and sleep disturbances in children. Parents also noted that many children who spend time gaming excessively are also missing or giving up hobbies they once had, like sports. This aligns with findings from King and Delfabbro (2017), who reported that children addicted to playing games show little to no interest in participating in sports or other previously enjoyed activities and hobbies.

A few parents also reflected on how when their child was not actively playing video games, they would be curious about when they could get back to playing games, almost having a rush to get through things to get back home. Rivero et al. (2023) also found that when children and teens have problematic game use, they report a sense of

urgency to get back to playing video games. Other parents noted that sometimes their child seemed sad or almost depressed when not playing games, which coincides with data found by Bernaldo-de-Quiros et al. (2022) and Carras et al. (2017).

## **Theme 2: Socialization Within Playing Video Games**

The second theme refers to how participants described key observations of their children primarily engaging with others online and struggling to interact with peers in a face-to-face environment. Many parents reported that the commonality and connections of playing video games were a driving force for their children's socialization with friends or even with other family members. Parents noted that, often, it was the father who played games with the kids. In single-parent households, sometimes mothers would join in. Kousari and Mehrabi (2017) discussed parents joining kids in playing games to learn more about the games and understand potential online safety issues. This was frequently mentioned by families who wanted to know who their children were playing games with and what type of content was being consumed.

Other parents reported that not only is gaming the connection piece between peers, but conversations about video games are also a common way they observe their children interacting with others. Parents expressed a common worry about who their children are interacting with online and felt they had to spend time familiarizing themselves with the games to better understand what their children are doing. These results match studies done by Schneider et al. (2017), who found that individuals with a disrupted home life are more likely to develop a gaming addiction, and Turner et al. (2012) observed children struggling with socialization when playing a lot of video games.

Yim and Kewon (2023) also stressed that the influence of peers talking about games can lead to increased gameplay and possible addictions. This suggests that parents in my study are finding it difficult to curb their children's gaming habits when they are inadvertently influenced by their peers to play more when talking at school or other social events.

### **Theme 3: Family Functioning and Children's Gaming Habits**

This third theme explores how parents perceive their child's excessive video game use and its implications on the family. This theme focuses on aspects of family life as simple as wanting the child to go out and run errands with them or attending larger family events like siblings' sports tournaments or weddings. Parents often reported observing their child wanting to disengage from family meal times or in-home movie times to spend time in their room playing video games. Some parents also felt a sense of guilt for removing games as punishment for bad grades or behavioral outbursts, as they noted it made them seem like the "bad guy," and there was a lot of hostility directed toward them for doing so. This aligns with Pivetta et al.'s (2023) findings when they explored mother and child connectedness and problematic gaming. Pivetta et al. (2023) found that when teens do not have a strong feeling of connection with their mothers, they show higher reported use of problematic video game playing. Shoshani et al. (2021) also found that interconnected families have fewer problematic gaming incidents with their children.

Many of the participants in this study mentioned family dysfunction or problems. Topics ranged from conflictual interactions to defiance when having to promote doing

things other than playing video games. Ono et al. (2023) also found in their long-term study that family dysfunction continues when children and teens do not get support for their addictive gaming habits. Gan et al. (2024) also supported these findings in their study about how family dysfunction can encourage teens and children to revert to playing games to cope with disruptions in relationships. Eliseeva and Krieger (2021) also noted in their study that children who had disharmonious relationships with their parents were more likely to be engaged in problematic gaming usage.

#### **Theme 4: Strategies to Decrease Gaming Time**

The final theme that emerged in this data set referred to how parents would try to decrease the amount of time their children spent playing games. This theme arose when parents were asked about their efforts to reduce the time spent on gaming. Most families had similar responses, noting that the amount of time spent playing games varied during the school year, the summer, and on weekends. Despite these variations, parents commonly expressed concerns about how much time their child spends playing video games throughout the year. Lieberoth and Fiskaali (2021) found in their study that some parents who expressed high levels of worry about their children's gaming habits may also have insight into the behavioral problems that come along with it and try to decrease game time to reduce these behaviors.

Parents reported setting strict time limits and boundaries on their children's game use during the school year, but these rules were more relaxed on weekends. Many families felt that when their child spent too much time playing games during the school year, their performance and grades suffered. These reports were consistent with the

findings of Turner et al. (2012), which noted that studies were often neglected in favor of gaming. Hu and Fan (2023) also supported this, finding that while parents would increase their rules around gameplay and decrease time limits, teens would also put in effort to circumvent these rules.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory, which describes the dynamics of short- and long-term interpersonal relationships, was used for this study. Infants attach to their caregivers, and the quality of this early attachment becomes significant in the children's development and in learning how to regulate their feelings. Bowlby (1969) explained that parents and children must work jointly to maintain their relationship in a manner consistent with cognitive representations derived from their history of interactions with significant others.

Previous studies were conducted to examine and explore how attachment in children could potentially impact their engagement in excessive video game usage. Attachment is disrupted or becomes inadequate when children perceive that their parents do not adapt their internal perspectives or expectations in line with their social, emotional, and behavioral development. As children age, their relationships with their parents tend to continue to be either positive or negative, reflecting what occurred earlier in the child's life (King & Delfabbro, 2017). Fletcher et al. (2014) observed that when children and parents have inconsistent interactions that are disrupted and not given the proper opportunity to cope, they are at risk of developing addictions.

Working within the framework of attachment theory, there are three components that shape the parent-child relationship: (a) trust, (b) communication, and (c) feelings of alienation (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Bowlby, 1988). These factors contribute to the overall quality of parental attachment. Trust refers to adolescents' confidence that parents understand and respect their needs and desires; communication refers to adolescents' perceptions that parents are open to their emotional states; and alienation refers to adolescents' feelings of isolation, anger, and detachment experienced in attachment relationships with parents (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Guarnieri et al., 2010). These ideas from attachment theory have been used to explain parent-child interactions and family dynamics (e.g., Guarnieri et al., 2010; Ishak et al., 2010). Attachment theory applied to problem gaming in adolescence suggests that teenagers with insecure attachment styles seek out the security and emotional comfort of virtual relationships (Milani et al., 2009). Satisfying relationship and security needs through reliance on Internet game use may then develop into a pattern of avoidance and/or conflict with parents (King & Delfabbro, 2017).

When interviewing parents and getting feedback about their perceptions of their children, some of these attachment themes emerged, and interpretations could be made about the struggles in the relationships. Parents who reported having conflict with their children, especially those from households of divorce, reported more intense feelings of anger from their children and a greater disconnect from them. These findings were consistent with the study conducted by King and Delfabbro (2017).



### **Limitations of the Study**

I made my best efforts to ensure that this study is both trustworthy and accurate. The initial intention was to conduct face-to-face interviews as well as offer virtual meetings via Zoom. All participants for this study met virtually via Zoom, as they were located in various locations across the United States, with one participant in Japan as part of the United States Armed Services. This could be considered a limitation when trying to apply the results to a small community or a specific region within the United States. Additionally, there were no participants from other countries, and the family gaming experience may be reported differently elsewhere.

Another limitation is the variety of participants from different cultural backgrounds. While this information was useful from many different perspectives, it could be challenging to transfer results among families who identify as Black, Asian, Indian, or Hispanic, as their family values or belief systems could differ from the dominant White culture in the United States. The one shared aspect of all these families was that they were raising children in American culture and had children who were subjected to the unique nature of socializing with peers as part of growing up in the United States.

One additional limitation of this study is the aspect of social desirability and how parents might not want to admit that their children struggle with overindulging in video games. I reminded families that this information would be kept completely confidential and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Using my skills as a therapist, I tried to build rapport with these participants and offer validation in their statements when

they reported that it was difficult at times to parent a child when they were upset or angry.

### **Recommendations**

The results of this study aligned with previous studies showing the behavioral, social, and academic struggles of children and teenagers who engage in excessive video game use. The parental experiences and descriptions offered a richer and more detailed perspective on what it is like to parent a child struggling with gaming habits and the emotional processes parents go through when witnessing outbursts or social struggles.

One recommendation for continuing this study would be to gather participants' perspectives from one specific cultural background rather than mixing them. More unique and valuable data could be obtained by focusing on the experiences of families from specific cultural backgrounds, such as only Asian or Black households, and examining how these themes may be similar or different to what was found here. This could also extend to exploring interviews with individuals who live in different parts of the world, such as Europe, Africa, or Asia, to see how those areas may produce similar or different results.

An additional recommendation for furthering this study would be to narrow down the age ranges of the children or teenagers being studied. This would provide more specific themes and data for researchers to analyze, applicable to those age ranges. School and social demands differ for children in elementary school compared to those in junior high or high school. As discussed by King and Delfabbro (2017), as children age and their temperament changes, so does the relationship with their parents. It would be

helpful to explore and research just teens or just younger children to obtain thematic data applicable to those age groups.

### **Implications**

The initial impetus for this study was my observation, as a therapist, of a trend where parents often reported concerns and frustrations about their children and teenagers spending countless hours and money on video games. Studies by Beranuy et al. (2013) indicated that children who play games excessively tend to struggle more with social interactions, and Haghbin et al. (2013) noted increased difficulties in school for these children. However, there was a lack of parental reports and experiences detailing what it is like to be in households with children who struggle with video game use.

The main focus of this study was to gain the perspective of parents and their experiences of parenting children who engage in excessive video game use. The information gathered from this study could inform future researchers about how the gaming industry is changing and making games more appealing to children. This, in turn, could provide valuable information for parents about what to look for in certain games and how they may promote excessive gameplay. Parents consistently reported the need to stay informed about what games their children are playing, and this study could encourage more families to take an active interest in their children's gaming activities.

Another implication of this study is the potential for developing therapeutic interventions for families experiencing difficulties with children who play games excessively. Specific types of parental support or therapy groups could be created based on this information, and treatment approaches for children could also be developed.

Further research could aid in the development of behavioral or cognitive techniques to support children or teens who need help with their game use.

The final implication is the potential to address the social aspects of children struggling with excessive game use. Schools and counselors could use information from this study, as well as future studies, to facilitate socialization activities that do not involve video games.

This study aimed to provide a glimpse into the parental experience of having children who engage in excessive game use and to explore options for helping these families. Additionally, it aimed to shed light on how the gaming industry may be contributing to problematic or addictive behaviors that could lead to harmful coping strategies in the future.

### **Conclusion**

This study was conducted to explore parental perspectives on what it is like to raise and parent a child who engages in excessive video game use. Parents reported observing behaviors such as their children reacting differently when having to stop playing games, rejecting food to keep playing, and experiencing social and educational struggles. The participants also shared their internal emotional struggles, such as feeling bad about taking away something their children enjoy or grappling with how much they should allow their children to play versus letting them experience the natural consequences of playing too much.

Insights were provided into the world of video games and highlighted the need for more research from personal perspectives and experiences so that therapeutic

interventions and support can be created for these individuals. However, therapeutic interventions should not solely focus on the children but also on the support that can be provided to the parents. School teachers and administrators could gain insight into some of the behaviors of the children in their classrooms and develop an understanding of how or why some of their students are struggling with performance or social skills.

There continues to be a growing need for mental health support in communities in the United States. Many children and families are participating in numerous activities or feeling the pressures of being successful, leading them to turn to activities that result in problematic or unhealthy ways to cope. It is my hope that this study provides insight into helping children and families bond in more appropriate ways and that they can develop a healthy relationship with playing video games.

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## Appendix A: Research Question and Interview Questions

### **Demographic Questions**

1. Age
2. Ethnicity
3. Gender
4. Number of children
5. Age of children
6. Age of child(ren) who play video games excessively.
7. Gender of the child who play video games excessively.
8. Amount of time children spent playing video games daily.
9. Members of the family who live with the child who play video games excessively.

### **Research Questions (RQ) and Interview Questions (IQ)**

RQ1: How do parents describe family relations when having children engaging in excessive video game use?

IQ1: I want to know how families describe appropriate and excessive video game use for their children. Tell me,

How does appropriate video game use look like for your child? And how does excessive video game use look like for your child?

Probes:

How many hours of playing video game per day or week mean appropriate vs. excessive?

What markers do you see in your child to determine he/she is using it excessively?

IQ2: Tell me about your child who engages excessively in video game use.

Probes: how long does he/she play?

Since when he/she has been playing excessively?

Are you familiar with the types of video games he/she play? If so, which ones?

IQ3: What do you feel is the biggest difficulty parenting a child that engages in excessive video game use?

IQ4: What impacts on the family functioning come from the excessive video game use by your child?

IQ5: Do you find that when your child is not playing video games do they spend time talking about games or thinking about games?

IQ6: Has your child ever missed important events due to playing video games?

IQ7: What are your child's behaviors when not being able to play video games?

RQ2: What strategies parents use to limit or change their children's excessive video game use?

IQ1: What ways have you tried to change how much time your child spends playing video games?

IQ2: Do you or your partner/spouse/co-parent share the same beliefs about how to try and limit the amount of time is spent playing video games?

IQ3. What would you say your child thinks about the rules that are in place for their video game usage?

IQ4: Are there any limitations to how much access your child has to playing video games?

IQ5: Does your child respect the rules around video games?

IQ6: Will your child quit playing video games on their own accord?