PLAYING GAMES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON ONLINE GAMERS

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Abstract:-

This paper first covers the traditional meaning of 'gaming' and 'playing' followed by the changes fostered by the use of internet. Online gaming as an emerging phenomena is then discussed in the light of changing trends in the available resources, opportunities and lifestyle of the modern youth. The purpose of this paper is to study the lived experience of online gamers and to derive core psychosocial constructs from their inner life. Using the qualitative research method of semi-structured interviews, five case-accounts are used to explore what meanings does an engagement in an online game carry for them. Understandings around their motivations, dissociations, negotiations with reality as well as social adaptation are critically arrived at, using theoretical concepts and citations from personal stories. As this up-and-coming trend is becoming increasingly popular, its future implications are discussed by considering its ramifications in the area of education, clinic and society as a whole.

Keywords:

Games, Playing, Technology, Virtual, Reality.

INTRODUCTION

"You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation."

Plato

Playing games has been a vital part of the developmental growth of a child. However, what kind of games do modern youngsters and adults play? What psychological purpose does playing games serve? This paper attempts to delineate the traditional meaning of 'gaming' in the backdrop of psychological theorizing. Even as this playful activity is an inherent part of the growth cycle of a child, we discuss how has this process has undergone changes with the trend of technology and mass media, joining the mainstream. Particularly, the use of internet has led to a new phenomena of online gaming, assuming a significant part of the lives of the youngsters of today. What is so fascinating about this cyber medium that witnesses an audience like no other? So much so, that today's generation is far removed from playing rather unassuming simple games like *patang, kho-kho* or *kabadi.* Just as *'dadi ki kahaniyan'* are now replaced with 3D versions of spiderman and *ludo & saanp-seedhi* are now replaced with play-station, it is intriguing to observe a great disparity between then and now. The last one decade has witnessed significant socio-economic movements in the available resources, opportunities and lifestyle of the modern youth. This new social reality seems to establish a platform for a greater engagement with the fast, immediate and uninhibited form of life force that must render an action a sense of instantaneity. In this paper, we shall discuss some psychological ramifications of playing via a virtual media. The world-wide online gaming industry exceeds 76 million in revenue, almost at par with the movie industry, with more and more people switching to mobile and i-pad games than just PC or console games, especially in countries like China and Japan that continue to be a hotbed for the gaming industry (Galarneau, 2014).

TRADITIONAL MEANINGS OF GAMING

Play was pervasively believed, according to Puritanical ideology, to be sinful and distracting in nature (Brehony, 2008). However, psychological trends have largely come to understand play as a necessary contributing part of human psyche. The psychoanalytic perspective conceptualizes a child's repetition of play as based on acquiring an experience of pleasure and reduction of tensions. However later thinkers like Klein, Winnicott and Erikson have regarded playing as a prerequisite for the healthy emotional development of a child. It is in the first nursing, holding and cooing gestures of the mother that very first elements of play are bound for an infant who is still not adept at using toys. All forms of playing, believes Winnicott (1971/1997), occur in a third transitional space which is neither internal nor external, neither objective nor subjective, but lies in-between the object and the baby. He further adds how relationship with this play-object enables the baby to acquire greater health by learning to negotiate with the traumas of the external world, beginning with the separation from the mother. Play has also been construed as an inevitable part of psychoanalytic therapy. Use of free association as a technique, comfort in lying on the couch, randomness in space and time, rule-lessness and emotional resonance of the spoken content, all facilitate in construction of the idea that psychoanalysis involves two people playing together (Stufkens, 2008, Malhotra, 2013). Applying this understanding to modern-day gaming, Whitty & Carr (2006) suggest a possibility of tracing transitional objects in gadgets like computers, monitors, keyboards, mice, modems etc 'leave a trace' within us and trigger emotional responses, such as expectations, passion and curiosity which are reminders of previous internet 'encounters'.

From a child developmental perspective, one gathers that children's engagement in a make-belief play from the ages of two to seven serves a significant social and cognitive function. Piaget (1999) emphasized the importance of play in symbolic representation and its contribution to socialization, whereas Vygotsky (1978) described play as a 'leading activity' that offers children opportunities to use language, role playing, and learn self-regulation. Systematic research has demonstrated how this imaginative play based on the enactment of real-life representations enable children to assimilate social rules, aids in higher reasoning and divergent thinking, facilitates language and emotional development, integrates one's thinking with the feeling and aids in capacity for self-regulation, empathy, problem-solving and communication (Kaufman, Singer & Singer, 2012; Jent, Niec & Baker, 2011; Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Berk & Singer, 2009; Berk, Mann & Ogan, 2006; Russ, 2004; Hughes, 1999). Yet we come to know that elements of fantasy, imagination, symbolism and spontaneity have always been vital to playing of any kind. A sensitive parent engagement, stimulating opportunities at school and participating educators contribute to a greater development of creativity and autonomy among children.

Caillois (1961/2001), from a sociology-philosophy background, proposes classic typology of four kinds of play. 'Agon' or contest is governed by rules, 'Alea' refers to chance-games, 'Mimcry' is simulation and 'Ilinx' has a vertigo or movement-based activity. Each of these types of play lie on a continuum of 'Paidia' ("letting oneself go through spontaneous manifestations of the play instinct") to 'Ludus' ("a taste for gratuitous difficulty") as shown in table 1. What makes online gaming so fascinating and popular is the existence of all four categories of play types within its defined boundaries. 'Agon' is evident in how the participants follow

strategy rules, 'mimicry' is depicted in use of masks or avatars, 'ilinx' is shown in experience of being absorbed while sitting for hours in front of the screen, while 'alea' lies in the luck component of joining an already present group.

While play was traditionally regarded as the opposite of effective working, it was with the advent of modern educational toys and large scale promotion of Disney, animated game models, fairy tale books, audio-visual gadgets and more lately, online video games etc. that the world witnessed a global new trend. Playing no more remained segregated from the mainstream education but came to be an inevitable part of learning in social life. Today it is learnt that digital play shares with real-life play many important characteristics: it is voluntary, intensely absorbing, done for its own sake and rule-governed (Danet, Ruedenberg-Wright & Rosenbaum-Tamari, 1997).

Digital play: Influences of technology on gaming

Just as the idea of play is being revamped into a modern notion of digitalized gaming, the deep influences it begins to have on socio-cultural spaces is noteworthy. Dutch historian Johan Huizinga (1998) insists that adults continue to play too. Danet, Ruedenberg-Wright & Rosenbaum-Tamari, (1997) hold that computer-mediated communication (CMC) is strikingly playful. Adopting a textual, micro-linguistic approach, they insist that how typographic symbols and emoticons are used playfully for communication of self. The popularity of online games is attributed to the fact that it combines the fun and challenge of video games with the socializing opportunities of online communities (Seay, 2006). Furthermore, the motivations to play online games has also varied across different researches. Bartle's (1996) taxonomy categorizes these as achievers, socialisers, explorers and killers, based on the kind of relationships people develop with fellow players or the task at hand. Using factor analysis, Yee (2006b) identified five factors for gaming motivation namely, relationship, immersion, grief, achievement and leadership.

There are various categories of online games such as console games, real-time strategy games, multi-player games, role-playing games, first-person shooter games and browser games. Each of these is associated with a different set of skills and functions. Every day, millions of users (Yee, 2006b; Woodcock, 2003) interact, collaborate, and form relationships with each other through avatars in online environments known as Massively Multi-User Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs). Users log on from remote locations independent of each other, and interact with each other through graphical avatars to accomplish complex goals. MMORPG are simulated from natural settings where users immerse themselves into shared virtual environments (SVE). Avatars can be manipulated in their gender, colour, age, height, weight, musculature, hair style etc. The several users assume the role of a character depending on the nature of the game (profession or combat- oriented role) and can travel to different parts of the virtual world. Advancement to higher levels of game requires several participants who can interact with each other through chats or emoticons. In a typical game scenario, some crisis is built in the environment against which a team of players has to defend itself and perhaps earn rewards in the form of tokens (such as clothing, food, housing, weapons and entertainment that are used to build their home). Thus, we observe that the layout of the game requires effective communication, leadership, strategy-making, competition, decision-making, task delegation, crisis management, logistical planning, motivating group members, dealing with group conflicts, as well as encouraging group loyalty and cohesion. The nature of social interaction, derived online experiences and modifications in one's sense of identity is a keen observation that has caught the eye of several behavioural scientists. Turkle (1995) articulated how these environments revealed the fluid and decentralized nature of identities.

Yee (2006b) conducted online surveys on 4,000 gamers using popular virtual environments namely EverQuest, Dark Age of Camelot, Ultima Online, and Star Wars Galaxies. The demographic details reveal that the average age of MMORPG respondents is 26.57 years and comprised of teenagers, college students, early adult professionals, middle-aged homemakers, as well as retirees. Unlike the stereotypical belief of being lazy and idle, most of the participants had stable careers and families of their own (Yee, 2004), with 50% of respondents working full-time, 36% married, and 22% with children. Moreover, about half the sample reported experiencing positive emotional experiences in virtual than real life in the form of altruistic gesture by another user. The motivations to play games varied according to gender. Males were more likely to fulfil needs of achievement and manipulation (achieve objective goals) while female players were oriented towards relationship, immersion and escapism (form relationships and engage in fantasy). The virtual game setting triggers relationship formation, emotional investment and trust-building (Yee, 2003).

Playing shooter video games or strategic video games, has been found to strengthen cognitive skills such as spatial navigation, reasoning, memory, perception and problem-solving. This has critical implications for education and career development, particularly in disciplines of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (Granic, Lobel & Engels, 2013). First-person shooter games enables a sense of 'flow' or a condition of absolute presence and happiness that makes the play experience highly enjoyable and absorbing in nature (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Turkle called this as one's 'second self' (1984). One's personal identity becomes subsumed in the game and the player attains a strong feeling of control. The flow of a good match and challenges of one's skills become self-reinforcing and inspires one to keep going on. What makes these games attractive is also the sense of immediacy and spontaneity that they trigger. Internet creates a metaphorical world in which we conduct our lives, as though in reality, and where speed, motion

and direction become possible. Jean Baudrillard (1994), in his analyses of modes of mediation and technological communication, argues that we abandon 'the real' for the hyperreal by being presented with an increasingly real simulation of a comprehensive and comprehendible world. Nunes (1995) holds that distance disappears into immediacy, and presence becomes a state of simultaneity and transparency. Berthon, Pitt & Watson (2000) holds that the sensorial experience created by the simulation is even better than reality itself, such that it claims to supersede reality. Examples include the fantasy world of theme parks (Disneyland), virtual reality (role-playing MUDs, MOOs, and GMUKS), soap operas (*Third Rock from the Sun*), films (*The Lost World*), computer games (Myst) and the latest fad of Reality TV. Virilio (1997) argues that geographic localization has lost its value as we experience a rapidly accelerated sense of time and speed fostered by the internet. Danet et al. (1997) insists that four interrelated features of CMC foster playfulness: ephemerality, speed, interactivity, and freedom from the tyranny of materials.

Simple games that are easy to access and can be played quickly, such as "Angry Birds," has emotional benefits in improving players' moods, promote relaxation and ward off anxiety.

Nacke & Lindley (2008) studied the physical changes the person experiences during first-person shooter games. Physiological responses were monitored through muscle movements, pulse, and arousal states, as the participants were engaged in different levels of gaming. Video recording and post-game interviews were conducted. As the environmental complexity, variety of opponents, and difficulty increased, players experienced greater positive emotion, high arousal, immersion in the experience, increase of challenge and tension, as well as a heightened sense of action. Use of online games also extends to the medical practice as well. Video games may also be used to motivate patients to improve their health (Granic, Lobel, & Engels, 2013). In the video game 'Re-Mission,' child cancer patients can control a tiny robot that shoots cancer cells, overcomes bacterial infections and manages nausea. A 2008 international study in 34 medical centers found significantly greater adherence to treatment and cancer-related knowledge among children who played "Re-Mission" compared to children who played a different computer game.

There is a mixed picture pertaining to the effects of online gaming. Participation in online gaming can lead to decreased isolation and enhanced social integration for those players who use online gaming as a medium in which to spend time and interact with real life friends and relatives (Seay, 2006). As long as the play is used responsibly as a healthy recreational activity, it can aid in the expansion of one's social identities as well as patterns of communication and cognition. However, failure to manage play behaviour can raise issues of dependency, depression and detachment. Several leading studies indicate the possibility of addiction, spending long hours on internet (more than 40 hours weekly), experiencing withdrawal symptoms, feeling irritable in the absence of it and their usage patterns had caused them academic, health, financial or relationship problems (Yee, 2002, Seay, 2006). Deficits in self-regulation is viewed as an important contributor to the addictive component of online gaming. He found the mean time spent in playing online games to be 21.7 per week. Having fun and making friends were found to be the most prime reasons for playing. With the reality of this issue becoming increasingly daunting among the youth who form the majority of users, several educational institutes are now initiating programs to counter the overuse of gaming and internet.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

The purpose of this paper is to study the lived experience of online gamers and to derive core psychosocial constructs from their inner life.

Procedure

Qualitative research method of semi-structured interviews was adopted in this study to explore the meanings an online game carries for youngsters. Case-accounts from the lives of five participants were used to demonstrate our objective. Online observation of the social-networking and gaming profiles of the participants was also adopted as an important tool.

The interviews were carried over two sessions for each participant, wherein the narration was tape-recorded and transcribed. The interview proceeded as per the self-constructed schedule that attempted to explore areas of family, online tasks, needs and motivations and virtues of gaming. As a part of qualitative research ideology, it was ensured that the participants were briefed about ethics of confidentiality, informed consent, beneficence etc. An empathetic understanding between the researcher and the researched established the backdrop of interview method where sensitive listening, open-disclosure and gathering of descriptive information remained central to this work.

Sample

The sample comprised of five young adult males from the age group of 18-27 years, belonging to middle-class income group of the city of New Delhi, India. Their active interest and participation in online

gaming was an essential criteria of selection. Non-random snowball or chain-referral sampling was used to select the participants from several informants who also served to validate our thematic-based findings.

RESULTS & ANALYSIS

Games are now undergoing profound changes, with the world becoming increasingly digital. This paper attempts to study the lived experience of online gaming among young adults. Online environments as potential platforms for social science research is now being increasingly realized. Topology of social networks provides unobtrusive information that is in-depth and personally revealing. Moreover tools like anonymity and replication makes the cyber-experience closer to the lived experience (Malhotra, 2013). The participants belonged to a disparate population and background in terms of their age, profession and need structure.

The age group of the five participants ranged from 19 to 27 years who belonged to diverse work fronts like engineering student, call-centre employee, web-developer and freelancer. Narrative analysis was used to derive themes from the transcribed textual data of the interview. Follows below an outline of the five core themes that were derived from the life-stories of the participants.

MOTIVATION TO BE SEEN AND HEARD

The possibility to perform, combat, meeting challenges and thus, be regarded by others is an essential 'achievement' function of online gaming. Scientific innovations may be viewed as tools to expand social desires of producing new ideas, relationships, work and modes of being (Malhotra, 2013; Deleuze & Parnet, 1987). Another close motivational need that gaming fulfils is meeting & interacting with new people, making friends and gathering social support. This 'relationship' function serve as one of the core reasons that make online games so popular. Several studies have revealed that the interactional and behavioural patterns of individuals on virtual environments is similar to those in real life (Yee, 2004). Most of the participants preferred being with online friends than the ones they had in reality, a phenomena that thinkers have called as 'hyperpersonal effects' in computer-mediated communication (Walther, 1996) because of interactions being more intimate, more intense, more salient over the digital communication channel. The perceived presence of people and positive emotional and social support in online game has been found to contribute to a greater sense of social integration and reduction in possibilities of depression that stems from real-life isolation (Cohen et al., 1997). At the same time, however, these findings may observe opposite influences in case of problematic internet usage and excessive online dependence at the cost of detachment from offline world.

Saurabh, 20, was an engineering student at a reputed government college in Delhi. He put up in the hostel and was extremely fond of playing online games like 'Minecraft' and 'League of legends'. His prime motivation to venture online seemed to gather a sense of social integration as well as sense of personal and social achievement. He proudly mentioned about his close interactions with world rankers of this game, one of whom cleared his engineering (from a reputed institute) in a period of 7 years due to his addiction to gaming. Later, this person was offered a job by Microsoft as a 'professional gamer' because of his expertise in the game, he claimed. In this sense, it was not just the task of production but also to convert it into a form of a skill (Malhotra, 2013). He shared,

"I was into social networking sites very much since last 4/5 years... Earlier I joined Orkut then facebook then twitter. Gaming offered me the same chance to connect to others. I have made friends almost all over India and all over the world. I joined gaming communities. I realized so many people are like me...If I visit any city then I try to meet my virtual friends... When you meet people in a game, those pals make your own team. They help you fight out the task, jump, shoot, point whatever. It is great indeed to obtain reward points when I win a game. I also participated in the national championship on gaming and could reach the semi-finals. There nothing better to see oneself perform and produce extraordinary results. You can't get all this in real life."

NEGOTIATION WITH PERSONAL AND SOCIAL REALITY

Parten (1933) insisted that play behaviour is essentially for establishing social relationships as children grow, that may be seen by the form of associative and cooperative play categories. Multiplayer games such as 'Farmville' and 'World of Warcraft', become virtual social communities where one plays with a friend and where decisions need to be made quickly about whom to trust or reject and how to lead a group (Granic, Lobel & Engels, 2013). Moreover, gaming environment may be perceived as a place where many common anxieties can be overcomed. For example, users who have low self-esteem can become powerful and competent in these environments or users with poor self-image can choose to become attractive. Users with low internal locus-of-control gain a stronger sense of agency in these environments. Feeling empowered to cater to their anxieties is therefore evident (Yee, 2002).

Rahul, 24, came from a nuclear family, consisting of his parents and a younger sister. He was presently working as an engineer with a software company. The family was extremely conservative in exercising strict gender roles. This authoritarian upbringing had a significant and deep influence on Rahul's

identity as well as online activities. Gaming offered him a chance to freely live out his hidden life and shield away the apparent inadequacies. He claimed how internet gave him friends across the globe, with whom he went on sprees of meeting virtual strangers, exchanging numbers, fixing real life meetings and arranging outings with them. He was particularly interested in games like 'Castle of Heroes' and 'Adventure Quest Worlds'.

"Oh yes (firmly). Gaming has brought a huge change in me. During school and college, I used to be a very shy person. I was more of a geek, never into any school activities. Internet helped me a lot in the progression... how to interact, how to get in touch with people you know. It gradually increased my confidence so I have become more extrovert. I have more than 4500 pals whom I regularly play with. All of them have helped me to deal my own crisis. I could have never imagined being able to confidently meet so many people and develop friendships so large... to live out my dream. For me, gaming was not about enjoying a game but getting to meet the world out there. 'Fun'n'grins India' and 'Recycle bin' were some communities where I used to hang out."

ROLE-PLAY IN THE REAL-VIRTUAL SPLIT

The participation in the fantasy and imaginative aspects of gaming triggers a closeness with the narrative of the virtual environment, thus serving a strong 'role-playing' function (Bateson, 1972; Goffman, 1974; Handelman, 1976). Gaming also provides opportunities, to players, for a temporary flight from real-life stresses and dilemmas that Seay (2006) has called as 'escapism' function. In this absorption in the 'flow' of gaming environment, one also observes a real-life isolation and withdrawal in these dissociative mechanisms that draws on the collapse between the real-virtual divide in cyberspace. Pathological use of computer and video games has been associated with low self-esteem and low social competence. Lemmens, Valkenburga & Petera (2011) suggest that displacement of real-world social interaction in online gaming, may deteriorate existing relationships and increase feelings of loneliness. At another level, the task of manipulating real-life based situations and people, through gaming, was symbolic of one's expanding consciousness of the rules and norms of the social world.

Jagdeep was a freelance website developer of 27, the senior most of all our participants. A closer look at his life-story revealed traces of childhood trauma, that was lived out in his present day relational world. A strict father figure and an absent mother (emotionally depressed and now demised for the last 10 years) formed his troubled memories such that he could not bring himself to establish a unique career, work interest or identity. As a part of my initial interactions, he readily shared his phone number and sounded welcoming upon receiving my call. This forwardness turned out to be contrasting to his extreme inhibitions with a girl when he appeared face-to-face for our interview session. His guarded manner of speaking clearly revealed his anxious self that stammered in an inaudible voice. However, he defensively shield his vulnerability by suddenly becoming loud and confident for the rest of the session. Even as he abundantly used slangs like "hey", "kinda", "buh bye" in online chats, a certain 'pretence' in his demeanour came across, as did issues of belongingness and social approval amongst peers among whom he felt incompetent. His identifications with virtual world came across strikingly, as he avidly played a strategy-based games called 'Age of Empires' and role-playing game called 'Prince of Persia'. He shared,

"Internet gives you some kind of a shield. So whatever you write over there, you give a portrayal of yourself. It gives you a chance to become whatever you want. If you are not happy, you can just scrap your account and become someone new. That's a freedom that you get over there. There is a major difference between what a person portrays himself in an online avatar and what he really is. I have had more than 10 different avatars, some to have fun, some to project as somebody and some to tease others... What is so exciting about AOE is how one can light a fire, build an army, create rewards and what not. Its just so exciting to be able to create..." Even as he narrated his gaming experience with sheer confidence, the feeble Jagdeep now disappeared. He also posted a picture of the film character 'Hulk' on his social networking profiles who exerted strong physically power against all others. Similarly, he particularly admired the character of Neo in the movie Matrix, who lives a double life – a quiet monotonous life of a hacker Mr. Anderson and Neo, a powerful virtual figure empowered with extraordinary qualities. These identifications, strongly resonated a secret wish inside Jagdeep's inner theatre, as it also carved out the divides he experienced at the same time.

ANONYMITY AND AGGRESSION

The violence attached with online gaming seems to make the hidden evil surface. Shooting games, for example, involve participating in rather deviant activities that normally escapes our consciousness in waking life. The experiences of the gamers in engaging in an aggravation of the team players by killing or abusing other virtual players is termed as a 'manipulation' function that online gaming serves. Excessive gaming not just loosens the players' contact with the real world but also leaves them morally immature with a poor sense of empathy and emotional development, difficulty in seeing the world from other's perspective and in trusting the world (Macrae, 2014). The powerful feature of anonymity not only calls for a greater experience of freedom and openness but also forms a platform for uninhibited surfacing of the hidden impulses (Malhotra, 2012), of which aggression forms a core life force.

Inder, a 19 year old call centre employee was an avid player of 'battlefield', 'Metal gear' and 'Counterstrike'. His family consisted of his father (in service), housewife mother and a younger brother. He was pursuing his commerce degree through distance learning and wished to start earning quickly in his life. His gaming preferences were rather distinctive in a heavy aggressive nature. He went on,

"So you have to explore and you have to figure out where your enemy is and then you have to attack. You have to survive from your enemy, counter-fight and win over them.. I like fights that are head-on-head. Gunning & shooting is just so thrilling. You attack your target and boom... I enjoy hitting the enemy. Its so much fun. See, its a shield behind which you can have any name, become anyone and also do things which you won't normally do in real life. So why not?"

ADDICTIVE ELEMENTS

'Problematic internet use' and 'cyberspace addiction' have been some common terms that have recently found a greater citation in contemporary researches conducted across disciplines. Being a digital media, cyberspace today reaches to a large number of youth who are becoming technologically equipped. With this diversification of media technology that has become an inevitable part of our everyday lives, concerns about its effects on physical and mental health are becoming alarmingly dangerous (Malhotra & Nagpal, 2012). The proportion of youngsters with addictive symptoms has varied from about 33 to 80 percent among high net users (Young, 1998; Griffiths, Davies & Chappell, 2004). In a Canadian study on 109 girls and boys aged 13-14 years, 88% were found to be playing online games, with more than half admitting to playing everyday. Furthermore, those who played for more than 9 hours a week were found to have brain structure similar to gambling addicts, have a larger stimulated reward-centre and a greater release of feel-good chemical dopamine (Macrae, 2014). While use of terms like 'high', 'rush' and 'enjoyment' are very evident in narrations of the youth, this disturbance has found a mention in DSM-V (Block, 2008) with any five of the following eight symptoms like a constant preoccupation, use over long periods, repeated efforts to stop/control usage, dysfunctionality in work, home or social-based activities, withdrawal symptoms like headaches, eye-burn, sleep disturbance, tingling sensation, appetite disturbance, need for increased intensity to elicit the desired effect and irritability in the lack of internet.

Abhishek, 18 was a young spirited college student who was excessively engaged with multi-player gaming portals like 'StarWars'. He had spent a rather lonely childhood, being the only son of his working parents. Greater privileges saw him experiment with numerous gaming gadgets even before internet came. His interest in studies had been declining consistently to a point where he had stopped going to college. He mentioned being 'hooked' to gaming, without which he can't carry on for many hours. He always found alternate means to access gaming and also experienced consistent health issues. He shared,

"I admit being a slave to gaming but I enjoy it the most. I easily spend about 10-11 hours a day. At school, it was play-station that I was 'hooked' to. I used to sleep in the wee hours and sometimes not even that. So my head used to be dizzy, I felt frail and could barely concentrate at school...So many times I packed off my computer to put it away but within a few hours it would be opened back. Besides, now I can game easily on my phone and tab. Night and day... one game finishes, another starts. So its like that... at a stretch. Sometimes you feel that you can't start or stop anything at your wish. In the sense that its not in your control... Yeah. It was not. The urge was uncontrollable although I was always nagged about it by my parents and teachers but who cares as long as I get to have a blast."

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to present the discourses on playing that seem to have become an inevitable part of the youth of today who engage with a seemingly virtual narrative in online spaces. With millions of dollars produced as revenue by online service and content of virtual games, the future of online gaming elicits critical concerns for economy, as for the social and psychological realities of individuals. Using an ethically sensitive methodology of qualitative interviewing, the lived experience of online gamers was closely studied. Narrative analysis of the case accounts revealed five core psychosocial constructs centred around the online gaming experience. These were motivation to be seen and heard, negotiation with personal and social reality, role-play in the real-virtual split, anonymity and aggression and addictive elements.

Propensity to play may be harnessed for educational purposes, pedagogy, and forms of schooling. Educators in the modern world are redesigning classroom experiences by integrating video games and thus influence teachers and students approach learning. The working space of the clinic is also not left bereft of the influences of cybertechnology. The scope of gaming should also be explored for therapeutic purposes by integrating its prospects to enhance cognitive and social engagement skills. It therefore, becomes clear that while gaming is related with conflicted realities in the realm of self-esteem, withdrawal and identity, yet at the same time, online gaming is endowed with the psychological benefits of play as a construct. While one needs to caution against the risks of excessive gaming, its conducive properties may be realized, by researchers, clinicians and educators in the future, to construct a more befitting model of human behaviour.

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	AGON	ALEA	MIMICRY	ILINX
PAIDIA				
Tumult	Racing	Counting-out	Masks	Children whirling
Agitation	Wrestling	Rhymes	Disguises	Swinging
Immoderate laughter	Athletics	Heads or tails		Waltzing
Kite-flying	Boxing	Betting	Theatre	Mountain-climbing
Solitaire	Billiards	Roulette	Spectacles	
Patience	Fencing			Tightrope-walking
Crossword puzzles	Contests	Lotteries		
	Sports			
LUDUS				

Table 1
Caillois's typology of play and games
(Danet, Ruedenberg-Wright & Rosenbaum-Tamari, 1997)