

The Concept of Game and Game in the Digitalization Process

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Introduction

The concept of play is one of the oldest phenomena in human history. Play began with the existence of living things. Not only humans but also animals play. Humans unconsciously created play by imitating what they saw around them and explaining their actions to each other through movement. For example, a person who caught prey would explain how they caught it to others through imitation. These imitations gradually evolved into conscious religious and magical ceremonies. Play thus acquired a cultural identity. As adults explained how they hunted, children began to emulate their actions and adopt them as role models in their daily lives. Such games were passed down from generation to generation and formed the basis of modern-day games. A statue in the British Museum in England, dating back to 800 BC, depicts two girls dancing the minstrel dance. A mural in the Akhor cemetery in ancient Egypt depicts a girl playing a game of hand-clapping. Blocks found in the ancient ruins of Ephesus have identified areas for tic-tac-toe and tic-tac-toe games. A game resembling backgammon appears in Greek pottery paintings. In Egypt, a girl was buried with her doll when she died. In ancient India, game boards depicting games played with dice and murals depicting spinning tops have been found. Leather balls have been unearthed in tombs excavated in ancient Egypt. Activities such as lifting stones in water and playing the rope game are widely known games worldwide. Furthermore, ancient Chinese sources indicate that kite flying has a history spanning more than three thousand years (Lefebvre, 2013). Games have been part of our lives since the dawn of time, representing an activity that people of all ages, young and old, spend a significant portion of their time on. With technology making life easier in every aspect, it has also become increasingly prevalent in the realm of entertainment and gaming. As people move away from traditional games, they are turning to digital games. With increasing digitalization, games have become an indispensable pastime in

the daily lives of children and young people. Although digital games are mostly used as a tool to make the most of free time and reduce daily stress and fatigue, it is a fact that they are increasingly affecting individuals like an illness. Digital games are increasingly used and have become one of society's indispensable pastimes. Both adults and children can easily and intensely play these games in all areas of life. They even neglect their own duties while playing these games. In this sense, the existence of digital games has become increasingly widespread in society, causing people to spend excessive amounts of time on them (Özmen, Alıncak and Cağdanlıoğlu, 2023). The concept of play encompasses all pleasurable activities undertaken by individuals in their spare time, guided by primary goals and rules, voluntary, as a means of socialization, involving shared excitement, affecting both participants and spectators, and without any material gain. Some researchers have also stated that play is a way to release excess energy from one's life. In playful activities, individuals demonstrate the imitative capacity they have possessed since time immemorial, and this view has been adopted by some theorists (Hazar, 2006).

Play has become an indispensable part of human life from the dawn of time to the present day. Scientists have described play in various ways. According to Gross, "Play is an acquisition of experience; it is the individual's experience, through play, of the attitudes and situations they will encounter in their daily life in the future. Children thus have the opportunity to experience events they may encounter in the future in a protected environment." Freud defined play as "beneficial activities that help children and young people in their social development and in finding their individual identity." Freud also defines it as "a mirror that reflects the child's movements and identity." Plato defines play as follows: "Education should be carried out in two areas: physical/motor and psychological education. Referring to the importance of the concept of play in terms of physical education, children should grow up through play." Bandura defines play as follows: "Children communicate, express themselves, make friends, and become social beings through play. Children who socialize observe and acquire new behaviors through repetition" (Duman, 2015).

This increases oxygen intake, accelerates blood circulation and allows more nutrients to be transported to the tissues. Movement games also help children explore and recognise their environment. Games enable children to understand the world around them by using their physical skills. Actions such as walking, running and jumping develop the child's motor skills and encourage them to interact with their environment. Games play an important role in the development of hand and finger muscles. Activities such as holding, plucking, cutting and tying help children to strengthen their small muscles. This allows them to acquire daily life skills, learn and interact with their environment (Alıncak, 2017).

Games are a part of life through which all people, from childhood to adulthood, express themselves in the best way possible (Sormaz and Yüksel, 2012). From the earliest stages of history to the present day, societies have played games for fun and relaxation, and with the advancement of technology, there has been a shift away from traditional games and towards digital games (Özdemir, 2006). Digital games are visually appealing games that people enjoy using devices such as computers, tablets, and mobile phones to make the most of their time after completing work (Çetin, 2013).

Play is present in all stages of an individual's life. Play plays a crucial role in the individual's socialization and development into a significant member of society. It is the most fundamental activity of infancy and childhood. Games are the most important means of social harmony and solidarity. There are countless games. Games vary depending on where they are played, the number of people playing, the tools and equipment used, and the gender and age of the players. With the development of technology, games have also begun to undergo changes. The most significant change has been the change in the setting of play. Games typically played on the street have been replaced by games played in digital environments. One of the main reasons for street games and the shift towards digitalization is that streets are no longer perceived as safe places. Henri Lefebvre examined the street from a political perspective, writing "The Urban Revolution," in which he discussed the "power of the street." According to Lefebvre, the street should not be considered merely as a road, avenue, or geographical location. He argued that cafes, parks, cinemas, and the street are a way of life and have a special and profound meaning (Lefebvre, 2013).

Through games, children learn the norms, values and social skills of their society. This interaction contributes to their personal development and understanding of their social responsibilities. Traditional games are not only a means of having fun, but also provide children with the opportunity to understand and internalise the cultural richness of the society they live in. For this reason, traditional games should be recognised not only as a means of entertainment, but also as an important learning tool that carries the values, norms and cultural identity of a society. Thanks to these games, children not only have fun, but also enrich their social accumulation and create strong foundations for their future role acquisition (Budak, 2016; Abakay et al. 2015). When the research on play is examined, it is seen that there are many definitions of play, but it is difficult to make a common definition, and different meanings are attributed to each definition. The lack of a common definition leads to the conclusion that the subject of play is very comprehensive and has wide boundaries. The fact that there are so many definitions and theories reveals the importance and value of play and answers the question of why so much research has been conducted on it (Aydınlı & Ramazanoğlu, 2016; Ayan et al., 2015). Factors that influence the preference for digital games, increase motivation, and lead to addiction are

generally evaluated under three main groups. Factors such as gaining status, leveling up, and competing with other players, which are difficult to achieve in real life, are explained by the achievement component in digital games. The social component refers to an individual's need to communicate with other gamers, develop mutual aid and social relationships, and belong to a group. Furthermore, factors such as the inability to fulfill real-life tasks, forming an emotional bond with the game and character, deep immersion in the game, and establishing a connection between the game and real life are explained by the immersion component (Uysal, 2005).

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the concept of Game and the place and importance of Game in the Digitalization Process.

The Concept of Digital Games

With technological advancements, changing living conditions, and urbanization, along with the decline and disappearance of playable spaces on the streets, people are spending their free time using technological devices such as televisions, phones, computers, and tablets. In this context, digital games have gained a significant place in our lives (Gentile, 2009). Digital games are multimedia applications played using computers and portable technological devices (such as phones and tablets) within specific rules, with genres such as strategy and action based on users' preferences. They can be played individually, with other people connected over the internet, or offline (Kılıç, 2021). The concept of digital games has gained significant ground with the development of technology and its entry into our lives. Although technological advancements and the emergence of digital games date back to a relatively old era, various definitions have been offered for this concept. The terms video games and computer games are often used interchangeably in the literature, and some researchers have suggested that the concepts of digital games and console games can also be considered within this scope (Bozkurt, 2004). In this study, the term digital game was preferred. Digital games are defined as games played through various technological devices, such as computers, game consoles, mobile phones, and tablets, that allow user interaction, and that can be played online or offline (Kılıç, 2021; Erboy and Vural, 2010). In our age, technological advancements significantly impact many social and cultural areas. Technological advancements offer societies a new environment in which to share their feelings and thoughts and provide opportunities for the effective use of information technologies. The internet is now preferred by all age groups. Internet users generally access the internet through mobile phones, computers, etc. While the internet and technological tools are used by all age groups, they are more frequently preferred by children and adolescents (Güney, 2020).

With the advancement of technology, the internet, social media, computers, and the increasing number of users have also led to a rise in digital gamers. Digital games, promoted through advertising and other methods on the internet and social media, have become a major market. While games are a tool that contributes significantly to children's development, the decline of real-world play spaces and their replacement by digital spaces has also shifted children's socialization to the digital realm. Families' distrust of their surroundings, combined with the appeal of technological devices for the new generation, means that children prefer digital gaming platforms, where they connect through digital tools, to playing outside with their friends. Consequently, excessive use of digital platforms leads to the emergence of digital game addiction, particularly in children, adolescents, and adults (Şen, 2023).

The concept of digital games emerged with the development of technology and its integration into everyday life, where it has gained significant importance. Although the development of technology and the emergence of digital games date back relatively far, they are defined in different ways. In the literature, the concepts of video games and computer games are used interchangeably, while some researchers indicate that the concepts of digital games and console games can also be added to these (Mitchell and Savill-Smith, 2010). Bozkurt (2014) and Kılıç (2021) define digital games as games that are played using various technological devices (computers, game consoles, mobile phones, tablets, etc.), allow user input, and can be played online or offline.

Digital games, which initially began as a form of entertainment during free time, have gradually become a necessity, and their absence creates a sense of deprivation. Since playing games has become a necessity for individuals, any interruption in this activity leads to intense anger crises and aggression, causing them to disconnect from real life and take on a character that is unsuccessful, lonely, and irresponsible. Furthermore, prolonged screen time leads to physical problems caused by inactivity, such as obesity and diabetes (Yerlikaya Alim and Ersoy, 2023). In our evolving and changing world, every new invention has brought with it a transformation. Digital products, which have entered our lives with the advancement of technology, have brought our games, as they have in many other areas, into the digital environment. Games are no longer played on the streets or in playgrounds; they are played on digital devices such as tablets, computers, game consoles, and smartphones. The display of data on a screen in an electronic environment is called "digital" (Binark, 2008). Games projected onto a screen through technological products and played with the help of a console or on platforms provided by digital devices are called digital games (Gökçearslan and Durakoğlu, 2014). Like traditional games, digital games share the fundamental characteristics of voluntarily making leisure time enjoyable and providing a free environment. In this context, it can be stated that digital games are no different from traditional games, but parameters such

as the tools used, content, and gameplay style vary (Sağlam and Topsümer, 2019).

Factors Contributing to Digital Game Addiction

The games that are usually played on the street have been replaced by games played in digital environments. One of the biggest reasons for the games played on the street and the shift towards digital is that the streets are no longer seen as safe places. Henri Lefebvre wrote the book “Urban Revolution” by examining the street with a political approach and mentioned the “power of the street” in this book. According to Lefebvre, the street should not only be considered as a road, street or geographical space, but also cafes, parks, cinemas and he argued that the street is a way of life and its meaning is special and great (Lefebvre, 2013). Digital game addiction is also defined by various terms, such as excessive game use, obsessive-compulsive gaming, game addiction, pathological gaming behaviors, and problematic gaming behaviors (Karaduman and Aciyan, 2021). The deep penetration of technology into our lives and its ubiquitous accessibility make it difficult to recognize addiction to technological products. Because digital games can be played on almost all technological devices, a significant increase in game addiction is observed. Digital games are known to have social, cultural, and economic impacts. The ability to experience imaginary events that cannot occur in real life in the virtual game world is considered one of the important reasons for the preference of digital games (Uysal, 2005). In today’s conditions, it is possible to teach all lessons to children through drama. The reason for this is that the child obtains all his/her experiences through play and develops his/her ability to resist problems and to think (Alıncak, 2016). Thanks to the concept of play, children learn scientific concepts quickly and develop themselves (Alıncak & Tuzcuoğulları, 2016).

1. Success Component:

- a. Advancement/Progression: The desire for power, rewards, rapid advancement, wealth, and status gained during gameplay.
- b. Mechanics: The use of mechanical elements to enhance character performance and solve the game’s rules.
- c. Competition: The desire to compete with other players and the urge to fight.

2. Social Component:

- a. Socialization: The desire to chat and cooperate with other players in the game.
- b. Relationship: The opportunity to form long-term relationships with players living in different cities through online games.
- c. Teamwork: The satisfaction of working together and forming a group with other players during the game.

3. Immersion Component:

- Exploration: The desire to explore the game world and solve quests step by step.
- Role-playing: The desire to embody the character of one’s imagination and play

the desired role.

- Customization and Control: The ability to personalize and control the game environment and characters.
- Escape from Reality: The opportunity to escape from real-life problems and find refuge while playing the game (Yee, 2006).

The Positive and Negative Effects of Digital Games

Since the development of digital games, extensive research has been conducted on their effects on children's developmental domains. Although all age groups play digital games, they are also widely used by preschool children (Yengin, 2012). Research has revealed that games have both advantages and disadvantages, and these differ depending on the types of games children play and the amount of time they spend playing. Digital tools have become a part of children's daily lives. In the preschool period, digital games designed with the advancement of technology can be used as a powerful educational tool for successful and active learning. The use of digital games in education is beneficial for increased learning motivation and cognitive development (Zaranis, Kalogiannakis and Papadakis, 2013). Digital games have been found to be chosen for factors such as entertainment, spatial visualization, communication, language, helpfulness, empathy, and engaging elements (Toran et al., 2016; Anderson and Warburton, 2012). However, despite their benefits, they can also lead to numerous problems, such as addiction, during the preschool period, and parents have a responsibility in this regard (Yeşilay, 2020). Preschool children often exhibit behaviors such as imitating and modeling themselves on the adults around them (Akkoyunlu and Tuğrul, 2002). Studies have shown that avoiding excessive use and normalizing time spent with digital games have positive benefits, such as relaxing the individual (Prot et al., 2014).

Digital games can improve children's perception and cognitive abilities while also contributing to the development of their motor skills (Tüzün, 2006). During play, decision-making and problem-solving skills are developed, teamwork experience is gained, and a broader perception is developed (Bayırtepe and Tüzün, 2007). A competitive environment can help boost self-confidence through strategy development and a sense of accomplishment. Digital games can reinforce skills such as focus, planning, and coping with challenging situations (Eğitek, 2008).

Playing games for long periods of time can lead to physical health problems such as obesity, as well as trigger disorders such as sleep problems, headaches, and dry eyes (Amatem, 2008).

Children who play too many digital games spend very little time participating in social activities and gradually withdraw from social settings. This can cause them to neglect their

daily tasks, experience problems in social relationships, have difficulty communicating and maintaining conversations, become isolated, and become indifferent to distancing themselves from society. Research has found that violent games are the most interesting aspect of the disadvantages of digital games. The first studies on the violent tendencies of digital games began in 1976, and since the 1980s, there has been a significant increase in research on digital games. In 2000, due to visual and auditory developments in technology, children became more involved in them (Aydoğdu Karaaslan, 2015).

Griffiths (2010) divides the negative effects of digital game addiction into physical and psychological harms. Psychological harms include the individual's inability to stop gaming due to feeling good while playing, spending more time on the computer to play games, neglecting their immediate surroundings, experiencing feelings of emptiness, restlessness, and depression when not playing, and lying to others about fulfilling their duties. Physical harms include carpal tunnel syndrome, dry eyes, migraine headaches, back pain, irregular eating patterns such as skipping meals, and neglecting personal care and hygiene. Griffiths (2010) emphasizes sleep disturbances and changes in sleep patterns within the scope of physical harms (Ergür, 2015). It is particularly important to note that children who play digital games communicate less with their peers, and that violent games increase violent tendencies and aggression levels, desensitizing children to violence (Lemmens, Valkenburg and Peter, 2011; Brown, 2011). When considering the disadvantages of digital games, fatigue and drowsiness, decreased self-care skills, violent tendencies, impaired perception of time and place, detachment from real life, deterioration of interpersonal relationships, and addiction constitute a significant part of these (Ögel, 2012).

The world of digital games may differ from the physical world we know in terms of time and space perception. This situation can also cause children to perceive reality differently and be unable to understand it (Kneer and Glock, 2013). Children who play digital games excessively participate in social activities for shorter periods of time and become increasingly isolated from society as time passes. This can lead to neglecting daily tasks, problems in social relationships, difficulties in initiating and maintaining conversations, isolation, and becoming indifferent to disengagement from society (Ögel, 2012).

Digital games can be used as an escape mechanism for children who lack interest and do not have a healthy environment. These children constitute the group most exposed to the negative consequences of digital games (Kelleci, 2008). Until more extensive research is conducted on how digital games trigger children's development, caution should be exercised regarding screen time for preschool-aged children. In summary, when the study data is examined, it is seen that digital games are beneficial when used under supervision, but their unconscious use deeply affects children's development. Parents

have a big responsibility in this process (Budak, 2020).

- Violent games can encourage aggressive behavior in children (Asagem, 2008).
- Excessive time spent on digital games can lead to a lack of time for traditional games and a lack of socialization, which can increase the risk of antisocial behavior (Eğitek, 2008).
- Long periods of time spent playing games can lead to a decline in academic performance, failure at school, and even dropping out of school (Eğitek, 2008).

Conclusion

As a result, studies show that playing games has various positive effects, such as emotional relief, and that it is considered normal for people who lead healthy lives to play digital games. However, when an individual is unable to resist the urge to play games, exhibits uncontrolled behavior, experiences emotional fluctuations, undergoes changes in their thoughts, and experiences a serious disconnect from social life, this problem can be defined as addiction.

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