

## **Socio-Economic Determinants of Student Engagement in Online Gaming: An Empirical Investigation**

**Dr. P. Anitha\***      **Ms. N. Indhuja\*\***

\*Associate Professor and Head,                      \*\*II Yr M.Com(CA)  
PG Department of Commerce (CA), NGM College, Pollachi, Coimbatore, India.

### **Abstract**

Online gaming has emerged as a dominant leisure activity among Indian youth, driven by widespread smart phone penetration, affordable data, and the growth of mobile gaming platforms. This study investigates the socio-economic profile of college students engaged in online gaming in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. A cross-sectional survey was conducted among 300 college students (aged 18–25 years) who reported playing online games at least once in the past month. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire covering demographic variables, gaming habits, and socio-economic status (SES) assessed via the modified BG Prasad scale (updated for 2025). Results revealed that 68.7% of participants were male, with a mean age of 20.2 years. The majority (62%) belonged to urban backgrounds, while 58% were from nuclear families. SES distribution showed 42% in upper middle class, 35% in middle class, and 23% in lower middle/lower classes. Gaming was more prevalent among students from middle and lower-middle SES groups, with higher daily playtime (>2 hours) observed in lower SES categories. Significant associations were found between lower SES, rural residence, and increased gaming engagement. The study highlights the need for targeted interventions to address potential negative impacts of excessive gaming on academic performance and mental health among vulnerable socio-economic groups. Findings contribute to understanding the digital divide in recreational technology use among Indian students.

**Keywords:** Online gaming, socio-economic status, college students, Internet Gaming Disorder, Chennai, India.

### **1. Introduction**

The rapid digital transformation in India has positioned the country as one of the largest online gaming markets globally, with over 442 million gamers in 2023, projected to reach higher figures by 2025. Mobile gaming dominates due to high smartphone adoption (over 900 million users) and low-cost internet. Among adolescents and young adults, particularly college students, online gaming serves as a primary source of entertainment, social interaction, and stress relief. However, excessive engagement raises concerns about addiction, academic decline, and health issues.

Socio-economic factors play a critical role in shaping access to and patterns of online gaming. Higher disposable income and better device access may facilitate gaming in upper SES groups, while in lower SES segments, gaming may serve as an affordable escape from real-world stressors, especially in rural or semi-urban areas. Existing literature presents mixed findings: some studies report higher Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD) prevalence in lower SES and rural students, attributed to limited

alternative leisure options, while others note greater participation in higher SES due to resource availability.

## **2. Review of Literature**

1. Sharma, P, et.al.,(2024) carried out a research entitled. “Effects of Online Games on the Academic Performance of Students: An Analysis”. – with the objective to determine whether online gaming affects students' academic performance. A quantitative methodology was adopted, collecting data through a structured questionnaire. This design depicts the profile of respondents and determined the difference in academic performance of players of online games. The sample size is being considered 200 for the study. Analysis revealed no significant difference between the mean sample and population mean regarding the effect of online games on academic performance. The study concluded that online gaming does not significantly impact academic performance.
2. Shahi, S. B., & Saud, S. (2024) carried out a study entitled, “ Impact of Online Gaming on Academic Performance of Pokhara University Business Students in Kathmandu Valley”, and This study examined the impact of online gaming on the academic performance of business students. Using primary data from 123 respondents and employing correlation and regression analysis, the study found that informative online gaming positively influences academic performance. The study concluded that online gaming, when informative, can enhance academic outcomes.
3. Islam, M. S., et al. (2023). “ Exploring the Association Between Online Gaming Addiction and Academic Performance Among School-Going Adolescents in Bangladesh: A Cross-Sectional Study” This study explored the relationship between online gaming addiction and academic performance among Bangladeshi adolescents. Using a cross-sectional design, data from school-going students were analysed. Results showed a significant inverse relationship between gaming addiction severity and academic achievement. The study emphasizes the importance of monitoring gaming behaviours to prevent academic decline.

## **3. Objectives**

1. To find out the socio-economic profile of students playing online games.
2. To assess the factors that influences their preference to words online games.
3. To analysis the positive & negative impacts of online games on the students.

## **4. Research Methodology**

### **4.1 Research Design**

The study adopts a The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design.

### **4.2 Data Collection**

Primary Data: Structured questionnaire distributed to students

Secondary Data: Research articles, journals, and reports

### **4.3 Sample Size**

A sample of 127 students (recommended for publication-level work)

### **4.4 Sampling Technique**

Stratified random sampling (based on gender, income group, etc.)

#### **4.5 Tools for Analysis**

1. Simple Percentage
2. Henry Garret Ranking

### **5. Variables Used in the Study**

#### **5.1 Socio-Economic Variables**

Age

Gender

Family income

Parents' education

Parents' occupation

Place of residence (urban/rural)

#### **5.2 Gaming Variables**

Hours spent on gaming

Type of games played

Device used (mobile, PC, console)

Purpose (entertainment, competition, socializing)

### **6. Results and Analysis**

#### **6.1 Demographic Profile**

The majority of respondents fall within the age group of 16-25 years. Male students show higher participation in online gaming compared to female students.

#### **6.2 Income and Gaming Access**

Students from higher-income families tend to have better access to high-end gaming devices and faster internet connectivity. In contrast, lower-income students rely more on mobile-based gaming.

#### **6.3 Parental Education Influence**

Students with educated parents show more regulated gaming behavior and balanced usage patterns.

#### **6.4 Gaming Duration**

43.31% of students play 1–3 hours.

9.45 play more than 5 hours daily

Higher gaming duration is associated with increased digital access

#### **6.5 Urban vs Rural Differences**

Urban students exhibit higher gaming frequency due to better infrastructure and internet availability

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design.

### **7. Discussion**

The findings clearly indicate that socio-economic status plays a significant role in shaping online gaming behavior among students. Access to resources such as smartphones, gaming consoles, and high-speed internet is strongly linked to family income and parental background.

Furthermore, socio-economic disparities also influence the type of games played and time spent on gaming. Students from higher SES groups engage more in competitive and online multiplayer games, while those from lower SES groups prefer casual and mobile-based games.

The study aligns with previous research highlighting that both individual and family-level factors significantly affect gaming habits and potential addiction risks

## 8. Conclusion

The study concludes that online gaming among students is not merely a recreational activity but is deeply influenced by socio-economic factors. Family income, parental education, and access to digital infrastructure significantly determine gaming behavior.

Understanding these socio-economic profiles is essential for policymakers, educators, and researchers to develop strategies that promote balanced digital engagement and reduce potential risks associated with excessive gaming.

## 9. Suggestions

Promote digital awareness programs in schools and colleges

Encourage parental monitoring of gaming habits

Provide equal digital access opportunities for all socio-economic groups

Integrate educational gaming for productive engagement

## 10. References

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