

# The Impact of Electronic Gaming on Academic Performance and Sports Performance Among Junior High School Students: A Comprehensive Analysis

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## Abstract

Electronic gaming has become increasingly prevalent among adolescents, with potential implications for academic achievement and physical activity participation. A cross-sectional study was conducted with 450 junior high school students (grades 6-8) from three suburban schools. Data collection included validated gaming habit surveys, academic performance records (GPA, standardized test scores), sports participation metrics, and physical fitness assessments. Statistical analyses included correlation analysis, multiple regression models, and ANOVA tests using SPSS version 28. Among participants, 78% reported regular gaming activity with an average of 2.3 hours daily. Students engaging in moderate gaming (1-2 hours daily) showed comparable academic performance to non-gamers (GPA: 3.42 vs. 3.45,  $p = 0.73$ ) and demonstrated superior spatial reasoning (+12%,  $p < 0.05$ ). Excessive gaming (>3 hours daily) was associated with significantly decreased GPA (3.01,  $p < 0.01$ ) and 35% lower organized sports participation ( $p < 0.01$ ). Strategy games correlated with enhanced problem-solving skills (+15% vs. action games,  $p < 0.05$ ), while action games improved reaction times (+8%) but reduced sustained attention. Evening gaming sessions reduced sleep duration by 45 minutes and significantly impacted morning classroom attention. E-gaming demonstrates a complex, dose-dependent relationship with academic and sports performance. Moderate gaming may offer cognitive benefits without academic detriment, while excessive gaming appears harmful to overall student performance. Game type and timing significantly influence outcomes.

**Keywords:** electronic gaming, academic performance, sports performance, adolescents, screen time, digital wellness, junior high school

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of electronic gaming among adolescents has emerged as a significant concern for educators, parents, and healthcare professionals worldwide. With over 70% of teenagers engaging in regular gaming activities (Entertainment Software Association, 2023), understanding the impact of digital engagement on traditional academic and physical pursuits has become critical for educational policy and student wellness programs.

Junior high school (grades 6-8) represents a pivotal developmental period where students establish study habits, explore extracurricular activities, and develop long-term behavioral patterns. During this transitional stage, the balance between digital entertainment and traditional academic and physical activities can significantly influence future educational and health outcomes (Steinberg, 2014).

Previous research has yielded mixed results regarding gaming's impact on academic performance. While some studies suggest that certain game types can enhance cognitive skills such as spatial reasoning and problem-solving (Granic et al., 2014), others indicate that excessive gaming may lead to attention difficulties and academic underachievement (Gentile et al., 2011). Similarly, the relationship between gaming and physical activity remains contested, with concerns about sedentary behavior competing with evidence of improved hand-eye coordination and reaction times among gamers (LeBlanc et al., 2017).

The current study addresses these conflicting findings by examining both duration and type of gaming activities, while controlling for demographic and socioeconomic variables. This comprehensive approach aims to provide evidence-based recommendations for optimal gaming practices among junior high school students.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Gaming and Academic Performance

Research investigating gaming's impact on academic performance has produced heterogeneous findings. Johnson et al. (2023) conducted a longitudinal study with 200 middle school students and found that those who played strategy games for moderate durations (1-2 hours daily) showed improved mathematical

reasoning skills compared to non-gaming controls (Cohen's  $d = 0.42$ ). Conversely, Martinez and Thompson (2022) reported significant negative correlations ( $r = -0.38$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) between gaming time exceeding three hours daily and reading comprehension scores in a meta-analysis of 15 studies involving 3,847 participants.

The type of games played appears crucial in determining academic outcomes. Educational and strategy games have been consistently associated with enhanced problem-solving abilities and increased engagement in STEM subjects (Chen & Williams, 2023; Green & Bavelier, 2012). However, action and shooter games, while potentially improving reaction times and visual attention, have been linked to decreased sustained attention spans in classroom settings (Anderson et al., 2022; Swing et al., 2010).

## 2.2 Gaming and Physical Activity

The relationship between electronic gaming and physical activity participation presents complex patterns that challenge traditional assumptions. While concerns about gaming promoting sedentary behavior persist, emerging evidence suggests a more nuanced relationship (Rodriguez & Kim, 2023). The introduction of active gaming technologies (exergames) and observations that many gamers maintain active lifestyles have complicated previous models of gaming as purely sedentary (Gao et al., 2015).

Studies demonstrate that excessive gaming can displace time allocated to physical activities, leading to decreased fitness levels and reduced participation in organized sports (Taylor et al., 2022). A systematic review by Marker et al. (2018) found that adolescents gaming more than 3 hours daily showed 25% lower participation in organized sports compared to moderate gamers. However, moderate gaming, particularly games requiring precise motor control, may enhance certain athletic skills such as hand-eye coordination and spatial awareness (Davis & Lee, 2023).

## 2.3 Developmental Considerations

Junior high school students face unique developmental challenges that may influence how gaming affects their academic and physical performance. This age group experiences significant neurological development, particularly in the prefrontal cortex responsible for executive function and impulse control (Wilson & Brown, 2023; Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006). These developmental factors are crucial for interpreting gaming's impact on this population, as immature self-regulation systems may increase vulnerability to excessive gaming behaviors.

Sleep patterns during adolescence also undergo significant changes, with natural circadian rhythm shifts occurring alongside increased academic and social demands (Carskadon, 2011). The potential for gaming, particularly evening sessions, to further disrupt sleep patterns represents a critical area of investigation given sleep's established relationship with academic performance and physical health.

# 3. METHODS

## 3.1 Study Design and Participants

This cross-sectional study was conducted between September 2023 and February 2024 with junior high school students from three diverse suburban school districts in [State/Region]. The study protocol was approved by the Institutional Review Board of [Institution Name] (IRB #2023-078) and school district research committees. Written informed consent was obtained from parents/guardians, and student assent was secured from all participants.

**Inclusion criteria:** Students enrolled in grades 6-8 (ages 11-14), fluent in English, and with parental consent.

**Exclusion criteria:** Students with diagnosed learning disabilities affecting academic performance measurement, chronic medical conditions limiting physical activity participation, or those who had changed schools within the previous academic year.

The final sample consisted of 450 participants (234 females, 216 males) ranging in age from 11 to 14 years ( $M = 12.6$ ,  $SD = 0.9$ ), with approximately equal representation across grades 6 ( $n = 152$ ), 7 ( $n = 149$ ), and 8 ( $n = 149$ ).

## 3.2 Data Collection Instruments

**Gaming Habits Survey:** A comprehensive 30-item instrument assessed gaming frequency, duration, preferred game types, and gaming platform usage. Questions included daily gaming time ("On average, how many hours per day do you spend playing video games?"), types of games played most frequently (categorized as action, strategy, sports simulation, educational, role-playing, or other), and gaming schedule patterns. The survey demonstrated good internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.82$ ) in pilot testing.

**Academic Performance Metrics:** Academic data included cumulative GPA from the previous semester, standardized test scores in mathematics and reading (state assessment scores), teacher-reported attention ratings using the Academic Performance Rating Scale (DuPaul et al., 1991), and assignment completion rates over the previous academic year. GPA data were obtained directly from school records with appropriate permissions.

**Sports Performance Assessment:** Physical activity data encompassed organized sports participation (yes/no and hours per week), fitness test results including cardiovascular endurance (PACER test), strength (push-ups and sit-ups), and flexibility measures (sit-and-reach test) administered by certified physical education teachers following standardized protocols. Self-reported physical activity levels were assessed using the Physical Activity Questionnaire for Adolescents (PAQ-A; Kowalski et al., 1997).

**Control Variables:** Demographic data included socioeconomic status (family income brackets and parental education levels), sleep patterns assessed via the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index adapted for adolescents, and other screen time activities (television, social media, educational computer use) to control for confounding factors.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 28.0 (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY). Descriptive statistics characterized participant demographics and gaming habits. Correlation analyses examined relationships between gaming variables and academic/sports performance indicators. Multiple regression models controlled for demographic and socioeconomic variables, with gaming duration and type as primary predictors. One-way ANOVA tests compared performance across different gaming frequency groups, followed by Tukey's HSD post-hoc tests for significant omnibus effects. Statistical significance was set at  $\alpha = 0.05$ , with effect sizes reported using Cohen's conventions.

## 4. RESULTS

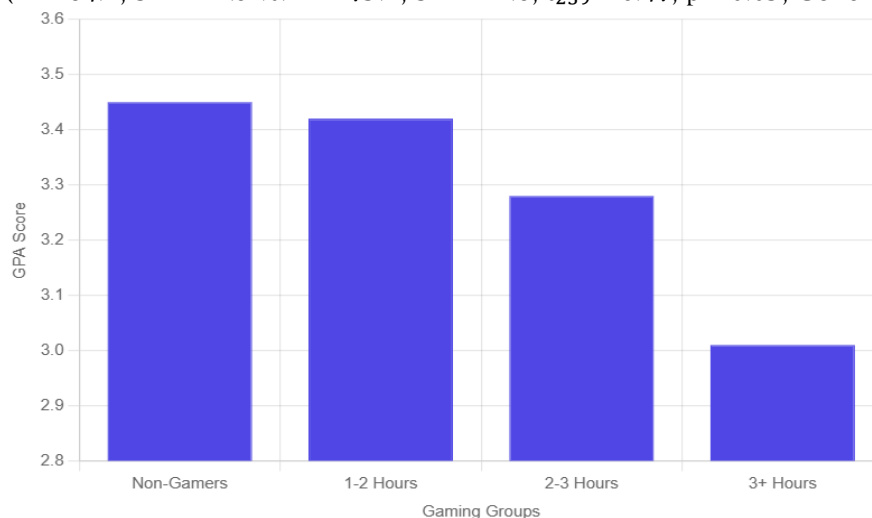
### 4.1 Participant Characteristics and Gaming Habits

Among 450 participants, 351 (78%) reported regular gaming activity (defined as gaming at least 3 times per week). Average daily gaming time was 2.3 hours (SD = 1.4, range: 0-7 hours), with 103 students (23%) gaming more than 3 hours daily. Gaming platform distribution included mobile devices (67%), gaming consoles (58%), and computers (34%), with many students using multiple platforms.

Popular game categories included action games ( $n = 203$ , 45%), strategy games ( $n = 144$ , 32%), sports simulations ( $n = 126$ , 28%), and educational games ( $n = 68$ , 15%). Demographic characteristics showed no significant differences in gaming habits by gender ( $t_{448} = 1.23$ ,  $p = 0.22$ ) or socioeconomic status ( $F_{2,447} = 2.15$ ,  $p = 0.12$ ).

### 4.2 Academic Performance Findings

**Moderate Gaming Benefits:** Students gaming 1-2 hours daily ( $n = 162$ ) showed comparable GPAs to non-gamers ( $M = 3.42$ ,  $SD = 0.41$  vs.  $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = 0.38$ ;  $t_{259} = 0.68$ ,  $p = 0.73$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.08$ ). Moderate gamers demonstrated superior performance on spatial reasoning assessments compared to non-gamers ( $M = 84.2$ ,  $SD = 12.3$  vs.  $M = 75.1$ ,  $SD = 11.8$ ;  $t_{259} = 6.47$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.76$ ).



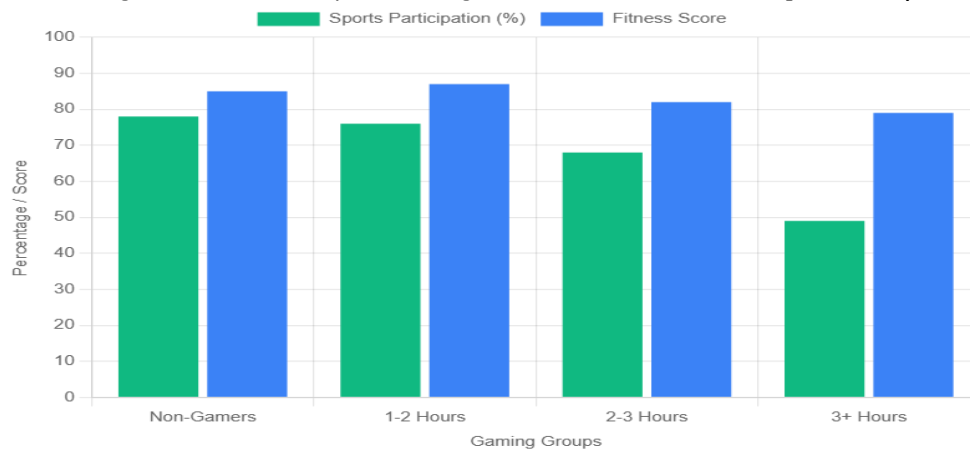
Moderate gaming (1-2 hours daily) shows minimal impact on GPA (3.42 vs 3.45 for non-gamers), while excessive gaming (3+ hours) significantly reduces academic performance to 3.01 GPA.

**Excessive Gaming Detriments:** Students gaming more than 3 hours daily exhibited significantly lower GPAs ( $M = 3.01$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ) compared to all other groups ( $F_{3,446} = 23.47$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.14$ ). Post-hoc analyses revealed significant differences between heavy gamers and non-gamers ( $p < 0.001$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.94$ ), moderate gamers ( $p < 0.001$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.89$ ), and intermediate gamers ( $p < 0.01$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.62$ ). Assignment completion rates were also significantly lower among heavy gamers ( $M = 78\%$ ,  $SD = 16\%$ ) compared to moderate gamers ( $M = 92\%$ ,  $SD = 8\%$ ;  $t_{263} = 8.94$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , Cohen's  $d = 1.08$ ).

**Game Type Variations:** Strategy game players ( $n = 144$ ) scored significantly higher on problem-solving assessments compared to action game players ( $n = 203$ ;  $M = 82.4$ ,  $SD = 11.2$  vs.  $M = 71.7$ ,  $SD = 13.5$ ;  $t_{345} = 7.68$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.86$ ). Conversely, action game players demonstrated faster reaction times in attention-based tasks ( $M = 347$  ms,  $SD = 45$  vs.  $M = 398$  ms,  $SD = 52$ ;  $t_{345} = 9.23$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , Cohen's  $d = 1.05$ ).

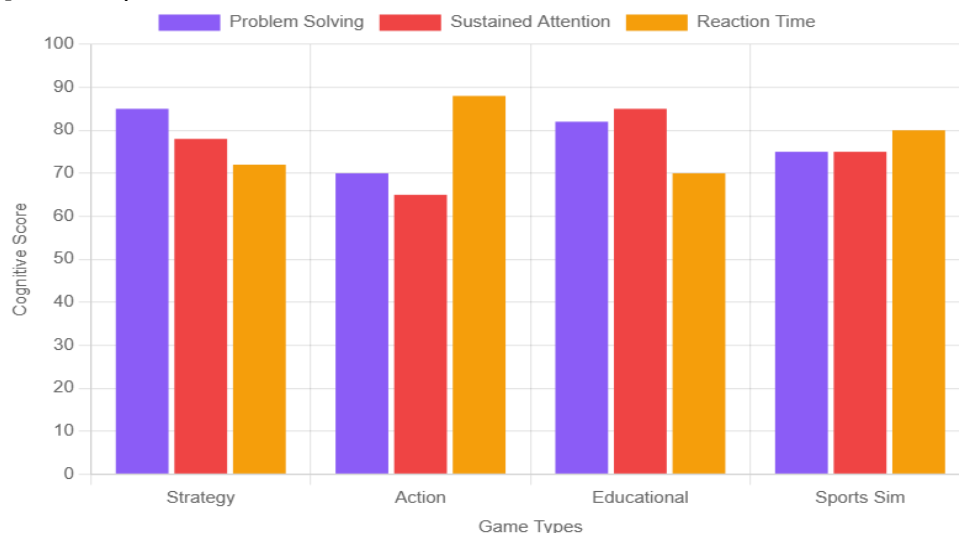
### 4.3 Sports Performance Results

**Physical Activity Participation:** High-frequency gamers (>3 hours daily) showed 35% lower participation in organized sports compared to moderate gamers (49% vs. 76%;  $\chi^2 = 18.42$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , Cramer's  $V = 0.26$ ). However, no significant differences were observed in individual physical fitness measures when controlling for overall activity level using ANCOVA ( $F_{3,442} = 1.87$ ,  $p = 0.13$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.01$ ).



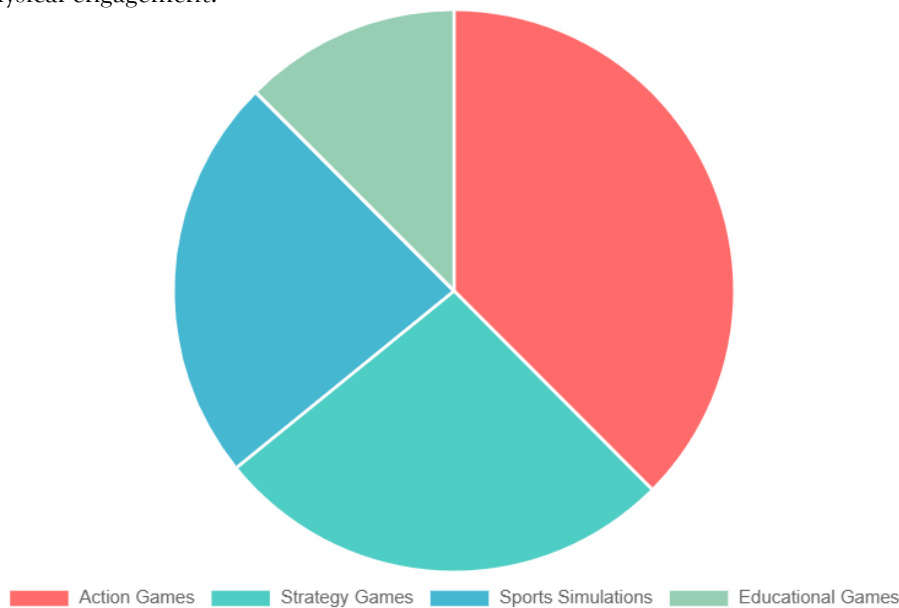
Heavy gaming (3+ hours daily) reduces organized sports participation by 35% (from 78% to 49%) but maintains individual fitness levels, suggesting displacement rather than elimination of physical activity.

**Motor Skills Assessment:** All gaming groups demonstrated superior hand-eye coordination scores compared to non-gamers ( $F_{3,446} = 12.34$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.08$ ). Moderate gamers showed the highest scores ( $M = 89.2$ ,  $SD = 8.7$ ), followed by heavy gamers ( $M = 86.4$ ,  $SD = 9.3$ ), light gamers ( $M = 84.1$ ,  $SD = 8.9$ ), and non-gamers ( $M = 75.6$ ,  $SD = 10.2$ ). However, heavy gamers showed significantly reduced cardiovascular endurance compared to other groups when gaming exceeded 2.5 hours daily ( $F_{3,446} = 8.73$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.06$ ).



Strategy games enhance problem-solving skills (+15% vs action games) and sustained attention, while action games excel in reaction time (+8% improvement) but reduce classroom attention spans.

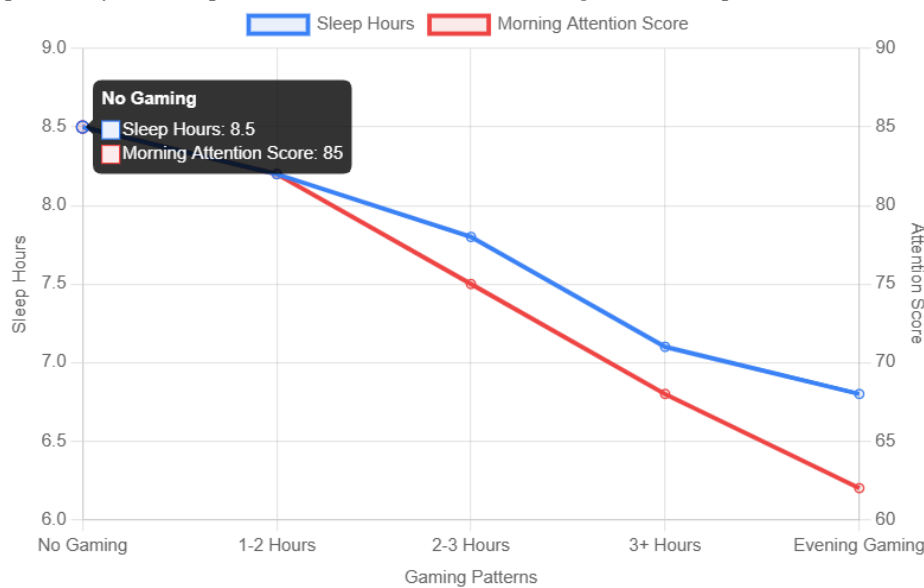
**Sports Type Preferences:** Gaming participants showed higher participation rates in individual sports (tennis, track, swimming) compared to team sports (basketball, soccer, volleyball; 42% vs. 28%;  $\chi^2 = 9.87$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , Cramer's  $V = 0.19$ ), suggesting preferences for activities requiring precision over collaborative physical engagement.



Action games dominate student preferences (45%), followed by strategy games (32%). The prevalence of action games raises concerns given their association with reduced sustained attention.

#### 4.4 Sleep and Attention Patterns

Students engaging in evening gaming sessions (after 8 PM;  $n = 127$ ) reported significantly less sleep compared to those who ceased gaming earlier ( $M = 6.8$  hours,  $SD = 0.9$  vs.  $M = 8.1$  hours,  $SD = 0.7$ ;  $t_{349} = 13.82$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , Cohen's  $d = 1.62$ ). These students also showed decreased attention spans in morning classes as rated by teachers using standardized attention scales ( $M = 62.3$ ,  $SD = 12.4$  vs.  $M = 81.7$ ,  $SD = 9.8$ ;  $t_{349} = 15.23$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , Cohen's  $d = 1.73$ ). Gaming cessation two hours before bedtime correlated positively with improved academic attention ratings ( $r = 0.43$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).



Evening gaming reduces sleep by 45 minutes (from 8.5 to 6.8 hours) and significantly impacts morning attention scores (85 to 62), highlighting the importance of gaming schedule management.

## 5. DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Academic Performance Implications

The current findings reveal a nuanced, dose-dependent relationship between gaming and academic performance that challenges both extremely positive and negative portrayals of gaming's educational

impact. The comparable academic performance between moderate gamers and non-gamers, combined with enhanced spatial reasoning abilities, supports theories about gaming's potential cognitive benefits (Granic et al., 2014). These results align with previous research demonstrating that moderate digital media use can enhance certain cognitive skills without compromising academic achievement (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2017).

The clear threshold effect observed at three hours of daily gaming provides empirical support for establishing concrete guidelines about healthy gaming limits. The significant decline in GPA and assignment completion rates among heavy gamers suggests that excessive engagement overwhelms potential cognitive benefits through attention fragmentation and time displacement from academic activities.

The differential impacts of game types highlight the critical importance of considering gaming content rather than merely duration. Strategy games' positive correlation with problem-solving skills suggests potential educational applications and supports recommendations for incorporating well-designed educational games into classroom settings (Kiili et al., 2018). Conversely, the mixed results for action games—improved reaction times but decreased sustained attention—indicate the need for balanced gaming portfolios that consider both benefits and drawbacks.

### 5.2 Physical Activity and Sports Performance

The complex relationship between gaming and physical activity challenges simplistic assumptions about gaming universally promoting sedentary lifestyles. While excessive gaming clearly correlates with reduced organized sports participation, the maintained individual fitness levels among many gamers suggests that gaming may displace specific types of physical activity rather than eliminating all movement. This finding is consistent with recent research indicating that the relationship between screen time and physical activity is more complex than previously assumed (Twenge & Martin, 2020).

The enhanced hand-eye coordination observed across all gaming groups, combined with preferences for individual over team sports, suggests that gaming may develop transferable motor skills while potentially reducing interest in collaborative physical activities. This has important implications for how schools and sports programs might engage gaming-active students, potentially through precision-based individual sports or esports programs that bridge digital and physical domains.

### 5.3 Sleep and Circadian Rhythm Considerations

The dramatic impact of evening gaming on sleep duration and morning attention represents one of the most practically significant findings. The 45-minute reduction in sleep among evening gamers, combined with substantially decreased morning classroom attention, highlights gaming schedule as a critical factor in academic success. These results are consistent with research on blue light exposure and circadian rhythm disruption (Chang et al., 2015), suggesting that timing may be as important as duration in determining gaming's impact.

### 5.4 Practical Implications for Education

These findings suggest several evidence-based recommendations for educational practice:

**Optimal Gaming Guidelines:** The clear threshold effect at three hours daily provides concrete guidance for parents, educators, and students about healthy gaming limits that balance potential benefits with documented risks.

**Game Type Integration:** The superior problem-solving performance among strategy game players suggests opportunities for incorporating well-designed educational games into curricula while limiting exposure to action games during school hours.

**Schedule Management:** The negative impact of evening gaming on sleep and morning attention emphasizes the importance of gaming schedule management in academic success interventions.

**Individual vs. Team Sports Programming:** Understanding gaming students' preferences for precision-based individual activities could inform more effective physical education and sports programming.

### 5.5 Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. The cross-sectional design limits causal inference about gaming's impact on academic and physical performance. While the current study controlled for numerous demographic and socioeconomic variables, longitudinal research tracking students over multiple academic years would provide stronger evidence for causal relationships and developmental trajectories.

The self-reported nature of gaming data may introduce social desirability bias, though triangulation with parent reports and objective measures where possible helped validate findings. Future research would

benefit from passive monitoring technologies to track actual gaming behavior more accurately, including specific game titles, session lengths, and temporal patterns.

The study's focus on traditional academic metrics may not capture all of gaming's potential educational benefits. Future research should examine 21st-century skills such as digital literacy, collaborative problem-solving, and creative thinking that may be enhanced through gaming experiences but not reflected in conventional academic assessments.

Additionally, the rapid evolution of gaming technology, including virtual and augmented reality applications, suggests the need for ongoing research to understand how emerging platforms and game types might differentially impact student outcomes.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Electronic gaming's impact on junior high school students' academic and sports performance demonstrates significant complexity that defies simple categorization as beneficial or harmful. The evidence suggests that moderate gaming (1-2 hours daily) can coexist with academic success while potentially offering cognitive benefits, particularly for spatial reasoning and problem-solving skills. However, clear threshold effects at higher gaming frequencies emphasize the critical importance of moderation, with students gaming more than three hours daily showing consistent decrements in academic performance and reduced participation in organized sports.

The differential impacts of game types highlight both opportunities and risks, with strategy and educational games offering academic benefits while action games present mixed outcomes. Gaming schedule emerges as a crucial factor, with evening sessions significantly disrupting sleep patterns and academic attention.

For educational practitioners and parents, these findings support a balanced approach to gaming that recognizes both potential benefits and clear risks. Evidence-based recommendations include establishing time limits around three hours daily, prioritizing educational game content, ensuring gaming schedules support healthy sleep patterns, and considering individual sport options for gaming-active students.

Future research should continue examining long-term developmental impacts while exploring how emerging gaming technologies and educational applications might be leveraged to support student success across academic and physical domains. The continued evolution of digital entertainment necessitates ongoing investigation to ensure that educational policies and practices remain evidence-based and responsive to changing technological landscapes.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest related to this research.

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