

# Video Games as Communication in the Context of Generation Z

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## ABSTRACT

*New media have developed sophisticated forms and types of video games that have become an indispensable part of everyday leisure time in modern society. Their presence enables various forms of socialization and communication; however, video games carry risks such as social isolation and addiction. The aim of this research is to examine the effects of long-term gaming on communication skills, time management and social interactions in the members of Generation Z. The transversal qualitative research included 15 long-term gamers from Generation Z. Data collected through semi-structured interviews was processed using thematic content analysis with inductive coding and triangulation by three researchers. The research provides an in-depth insight into the complex relationships between gaming, communication and socialization.*

**Key words:** online communication, Generation Z, video games, time management

## Introduction

Gaming has become a significant part of the everyday life of the members of Generation Z. When observing the development and application, it is considered important to emphasize that video games are in a continuous process of technological, visual and content development, which hampers their unambiguous classification. According to Haramija et al. (2020), the genre approach is the most commonly used categorization method utilised by the players and the video game industry<sup>1</sup>. When observing genres, games are most often divided into games aimed at education or entertainment. In addition, they also differ by the number of participants, from single-player games to video games with a smaller or larger number of players.

Members of different generations use video games as a means of socialization and building interpersonal relationships. This is supported by the research conducted by Kowert and Oldmeadow (2015), in which they state that online games allow players to create and maintain social connections, which can positively affect their social skills<sup>2</sup>. The authors Gentile et al. (2009) show in their research that early exposure to video games can have both positive and negative effects on the development of children and young people, depending on the type of games and the

style of play<sup>3</sup>. A review of previous research shows that long-term exposure to video games can have different effects on the psychological state and development of social skills in young people. Przybylski and Weinstein (2019) confirm this in their paper, indicating that moderate gaming can have positive effects on social connection and emotional stability, while excessive gaming can lead to isolation and mental health issues<sup>4</sup>. A negative characteristic of video games that affects many players is withdrawal from society and family, which can consequently lead to social isolation and depression<sup>5</sup>. Previous research has confirmed that players often start gaming at an early age, which can significantly shape their social skills and interactions with peers. In addition to social interaction, it is important to emphasize that video games contribute to the development of communication skills. The research conducted by Vasalou et al. (2008) highlights that online games encourage players to actively communicate and collaborate, which develops their social and teamwork skills<sup>6</sup>. In addition, the virtual environment allows players to express themselves in a way that would be uncomfortable for them in the real world, which makes social contact much easier and more enjoyable<sup>7</sup>. This interaction can be

crucial for the development of communication skills, social aspects of communication and, consequently, the ability to resolve conflicts among young people, which is the goal of this research. It is also considered important to understand how members of Generation Z manage their time when they are invested in gaming. According to the research conducted by Lemmens et al (2011), gamers who do not set limits on the time spent gaming may face issues in daily functioning, including academic and social aspects of life<sup>8</sup>. As the digital world continues to evolve, it is crucial to investigate the effects of long-term exposure to video games on this generation. According to the research conducted by Przybylski and Weinstein, long-term gaming can affect social dynamics and emotional connections among gamers<sup>9</sup>. Understanding these factors may help develop new social strategies to support gaming habits among the members of Generation Z.

### *Challenges in gaming*

Despite the advantages in the availability of information, communication that overcomes spatial limitations and enables connections with people all over the world, virtual communication also brings numerous challenges<sup>10</sup>. In particular, challenges such as communication noise and the inability to make direct contact can be highlighted, as well as those related to cultural differences and excessive dependence on technology. Consequently, participants may have a limited ability to perceive non-verbal cues, which requires focusing on available paralinguistic signals and speech pauses in synchronous virtual interaction in order to at least partially compensate for the absence of the visual dimension<sup>11</sup>.

Although virtual communication provides numerous opportunities for interaction, it also imposes numerous challenges that can affect social presence and disrupt communication between players<sup>12</sup>. This primarily refers to multi-player games, in which set goals are achieved through team communication that requires listening to other people's ideas, formulating joint plans and distributing tasks based on player abilities<sup>13</sup>. In these communication contexts, challenges arise from the players' use of words that clearly show or encourage aggression and inappropriate communication aimed at insulting and belittling. This is particularly evident in video games with a high level of violence in which players express aggression by imitating characters, justifying objectively aggressive actions, with the risk of social isolation and the development of addiction<sup>14</sup>. All of the above explains how continuous exposure to violence in video games shapes the "mean world syndrome" – the perception of the world as a place full of danger and aggression, thus encouraging desensitization and imitation of aggressive behaviour<sup>15</sup>. Therefore, we can conclude that despite the development of technologies and various communication channels, social media and video games enhance cultivation effects adapted to specific social contexts. By recognizing the needs and consequences of video games and the constant changes caused by the development of technologies, the

authors of this paper conducted a qualitative study that posed research questions that explore the importance of communication and the social aspects of communication among long-term gamers. In addition to the above, the third research question will determine whether the members of Generation Z have control and the ability to manage their time while gaming, as well as whether there are consequences due to years-long and long-term exposure to video games among the members of Generation Z. This qualitative research attempts to explore a deeper insight into the complex relationships between technology, games and social communication, and contribute to a broader understanding of the phenomenon of gaming among the members of Generation Z.

## **Materials and Methods**

This research utilises a qualitative interpretivist paradigm with the aim of in-depth understanding of the participants' meanings and experiences. The research design is transversal, meaning that data was collected at a single point in time without longitudinal monitoring of the participants. Qualitative data were collected by conducting semi-structured interviews with 15 Generation Z participants who are long-term gamers. All participants gave their consent to participate prior to the interview and were assured of anonymity and the possibility of withdrawing from the research in accordance with ethical standards. The research was conducted during 2025. Participants (P) are referred to by a number in this paper.

Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis method was applied to process the results of the semi-structured interviews, which is a qualitative analysis allowing for the identification, analysis and reporting of themes in the data set, systematic coding of qualitative data and recognition of recurring patterns of meaning. Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis is carried out by first familiarizing a researcher with the data, which constitutes multiple readings of the interview transcripts, followed by initial coding, i.e. initial code generation, and in the final stage, potential themes are formed by grouping the codes<sup>16</sup>. This research uses inductive data coding (Joffe & Yardley, 2004), which means that the codes are based primarily on the data, and not on previously theoretically defined categories<sup>17</sup>. Primary data processing was carried out by one member of the research team, with additional analysis carried out by the remaining two team members with an aim of increasing objectivity and verifying the result reliability (triangulation).

## **Results**

The thematic analysis conducted on the collected data enabled the identification of key themes reflecting the participants' perceptions and attitudes towards communication aspects that are consequently conditioned by virtual communication. The data analysis established 4 thematic units: *Beginning of Gaming*, *Social Aspects of Communi-*

cation, Time Management and Consequences of Gaming. The research sample was intentional, meaning that a researcher checked and found out the participants' characteristics prior to conducting the interviews<sup>18</sup>. Due to sampling specificity, this research included 15 participants from the Republic of Croatia. The analysis of sociodemographic characteristics data confirms that the research included only male members (100%) aged 18 to 27, members of Generation Z and long-term gamers who started gaming in childhood.

*Thematic unit: Beginning of Gaming*

Thematic content analysis through the thematic unit *Beginning of Gaming* identified 5 thematic codes (sub-themes): *Initiation*, *Social factors*, *Emotional experience*, *Types of first games* and *Technological context*. Table 1 provides an overview of the codes (subthemes) and participants' statements within the thematic unit. A detailed analysis of the data shows that the code (subtheme) *Initiation* confirms the differences between participants with regard to the time when they started gaming. The earliest age at which participants started gaming was between ages 4 and 6, comprising 26.7% (N=4) of participants, the average early age of the beginning of gaming for partici-

pants was between ages 7 and 9, comprising 53.3% (N=8) of participants, while 20% (N=2) of participants started gaming between ages 10 to 12. Furthermore, the analysis of the results in the code (subtheme) *Social factors* shows that 40% (N=6) of the participants stated that the reason for starting gaming at an early age stems from family, while socialisation with friends is cited by 13.3% (N=2) of the participants as the reason for starting gaming at an early age. In addition, the analysis of the results shows that in 26.7% (N=4) of the participants, the reason for starting gaming at an early age stems from personal motivation. The remaining 20% (N=3) of the participants do not state the reason for starting gaming. Further processing of the results confirms the code (subtheme) *Emotional experience* as an important indicator since the participants achieve emotional gain through social integration, with 46.7% (N=7) of the participants using games as a means of connecting with family and friends, while 26.7% (N=4) of the participants explicitly citing fun as the main motivation, and for 13.3% (N=2) of the participants, games enable creative expression or an escape from everyday life. The remaining 13.3% (N=2) of the participants do not report emotional indicators. The result analysis shows that the code (subtheme) *Types of first games* confirms action

**TABLE 1**  
BEGINNING OF GAMING AMONG LONG-TERM GENERATION Z GAMERS

THEMATIC UNIT: BEGINNING OF GAMING	
CODE (SUBTHEME)	PARTICIPANTS' STATEMENTS
INITIATION	P3: I started gaming when I was 4. The first game was Super Mario 64. P13: I started gaming when I was about seven or eight. The first game was Zoo Tycoon. P4, P6, P11, P12, P14: 8 years old (GTA, Lego, PES, FIFA). P5, P7: 9 years old (family and cooperative games). P2: I started gaming when I was 11. At first, I found it fun. P15: I started gaming when I was 12, Pro Evolution Soccer.
SOCIAL FACTORS	P8, P12: My cousin and brother were the initiators. P6: I also played PS Lego games with my friends. P15: I started gaming with my friends in order to compete. P2, P14: Self-initiated through fun. P7: I did not like playing competitive games that much because it took too much effort and time.
EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE	P6: Cooperative games (Lego) with family and friends. P13: Opening up a new world of possibilities. P11: I had fun, I was happy, I never gamed too much. P14: I spent my free time gaming. P13: The very beginning was an escape from everyday life and opening up a new world of possibilities.
TYPES OF FIRST GAMES	P9: GTA: San Andreas is definitely stuck in my memory. P12: GTA San Andreas, FIFA. P6: Lego games on PlayStation. P1: Warcraft 3 and Heroes of Might and Magic 3. P13: Zoo Tycoon – the ability to create and manage a zoo.
TECHNOLOGICAL CONTEXT	P4, S6, P11, P15: PlayStation 5 or PS games. P12: Xbox. P1: Warcraft 3, Heroes. P9, P3: An emulator on a computer.

games as the most common first games, as was reported by 33.3% (N=5) of the participants, due to the players' need for dynamics and challenges. Strategy games attract 20% (N=3) of the participants who have a pronounced tendency towards thinking and planning. The remaining 46.7% (N=7) of the participants do not report the types of first games. Further processing of the results confirms the code (subtheme) *Technological context*, with playing on a console at the beginning of gaming being reported by 33.3% (N=5) of the participants, while 20% (N=3) of the participants use a computer because it allows access to older games through emulators. The remaining 46.7% (N=7) of the participants do not report the context of the use of technologies at the beginning of gaming. Although the sample size may appear limited from a quantitative perspective, this study does not aim at statistical generalization. The research is grounded in a qualitative interpretivist paradigm, in which analytical depth, contextual specificity and the richness of participants' lived experiences are prioritised over numerical representativeness. The sample was therefore intentionally constructed to include long-term gamers belonging to Generation Z, whose sustained and early engagement with video games positions them as information-rich cases capable of providing nuanced insights into communicative practices within virtual gaming environments.

In qualitative research, smaller and purposefully selected samples are considered methodologically appropriate when the analytical focus lies on meaning-making processes, interpretive patterns and communicative dynamics rather than on the frequency or distribution of behaviours. Taken together, the identified thematic units illustrate how long-term gaming practices shape communication patterns, social orientation and temporal per-

ception among Generation Z gamers. Rather than isolated behaviours, gaming emerges as a structured communicative environment that mediates relationships, routines and self-understanding.

#### *Thematic unit: Social aspects of communication*

An in-depth analysis of the interviews through the thematic unit *Social Aspects of Communication* identified 3 codes (subthemes): *Language skill development*, *Communication skill improvement* and *Social relationship formation*. Table 2 provides a clear overview of the codes and participants' statements that are related to the thematic unit. Analysis of the code (subtheme) *Language skill development* confirms that 47% (N=7) of the participants achieve unconscious learning of the English language through online interactions and communication with players from all over the world. The reason for this is that games represent a natural environment for learning a language without explicit lessons. Furthermore, as many as 33% (N=5) of the participants state that they use gaming slang, which can directly contribute to its presence in online and everyday communication. Furthermore, the results confirm that 13% (N=2) of the participants question the use of the English language, which leads to the reduction of the quality of the Croatian language in written and spoken communication. Of the overall sample, one participant does not state the context of the use of the English language or slang in connection with the thematic unit *Social Aspects of Communication*. The result analysis shows that the code (subtheme) *Communication skill improvement* contributes to the reduction of social anxiety in 40% (N=6) of the participants, while 27% (N=4) of the participants report the development of empathy due to gaming, where they talk about recognizing other people's emotions and encouraging per-

**TABLE 2**  
SOCIAL ASPECTS OF COMMUNICATION

THEMATIC UNIT: SOCIAL ASPECTS OF COMMUNICATION	
CODE (SUBTHEME)	PARTICIPANTS' STATEMENTS
LANGUAGE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT	P5: My English has improved during gaming.
	P6: Spontaneous learning through online communication.
	P13: I use a lot of gaming slang that cannot be used in normal conversation.
	P6: Transfer of slang from the online environment to everyday communication with peers.
COMMUNICATION SKILLS IMPROVEMENT	P4: I have problems with formal communication after intensive use of the English language.
	P2: I avoided looking people in the eye and was more withdrawn.
	P9: It helped my communication skills. I am now open to other people.
	P15: My fears in communicating through a safe online environment gradually decreased.
SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS FORMATION	P7: While gaming, I see how people think, what is important to them.
	P12: Understanding different approaches to teamwork.
	P3: I would never have hung out with some people if it were not for games.
	P15: I have met new people and I am still in touch with them today.
	P8: Numerous friendships were made through games.
	P6: When you play with someone, you have to cooperate, coordinate, and plan together.
	P7: Developing a sense of team dynamics through actions that require synchronization.

coordination during team gaming. The remaining 27% (N=4) of the participants do not talk about communication skills. Further analysis of the code (subtheme) *Social relationship formation* shows that 53% (N=8) of the participants consider video games as an opportunity to improve new relationships and make friends. In addition, games as a social catalyst affect common interests and contribute to every initialisation of communication, which is evident in the statements provided by 20% (N=3) of the participants. Beyond chronological differences in the onset of gaming, the findings indicate that early gaming experiences functioned as formative communicative environments. Participants’ narratives suggest that video games were not merely leisure activities but early sites of socialization, emotional regulation and identity formation within mediated contexts.

*Thematic unit: Time Management*

Thematic content analysis through the thematic unit *Time Management* identified three codes (subthemes): *Time habits*, *Time control issues* and *Time regulation factors*. Table 3 provides a clear overview of the codes (subthemes) and participants’ statements that are related to the thematic unit. The analysis of the results shows that the code (subtheme) *Time habits* through intensive gaming for many hours is more prevalent at an earlier age or in childhood, which is confirmed by 40% (N=6) of the participants, while moderate gaming and its importance is reported by 47% (N=7) of the participants, however, only at an older age when the participants need to balance between their responsibilities and the free time they dedicate to gaming. The results also show the need for sporadic gaming, which is reported by 20% (N=3) of the participants who play video games in their free time when they have no other responsibilities. Furthermore, an in-depth analysis of the results indicates that 53% (N=8) of participants have experienced problems with the code (subtheme) *Time control issues* in adolescence, while 27%

(N=4) of participants indulge in games because they have no other plans. A lack of developed time management skills is observed in this group of participants. Furthermore, 33% (N=5) of participants state increased gaming activities during specific periods, during which players find a game hypnotizing or experience the “flow state” phenomenon. Result analysis of the code (subtheme) *Time regulation factors* shows that 47% (N=7) of participants associate the development of control with maturation, while 33% (N=5) of participants report time regulation factors in the form of external constraints (responsibilities, academic pursuit, parents etc.). In addition, 27% (N=4) of participants believe that the social context contributes to motivation and reduction in gaming.

*Thematic unit: Consequences of gaming*

The thematic analysis of the content through the thematic unit *Consequences of gaming* confirmed three codes (subthemes): *Toxic online communication*, *Physical health consequences* and *Debunking the myth: violence in games causes aggression*. Table 4 provides an overview of codes (subthemes) and statements of the participants relating to the thematic unit. The result analysis shows that the code (subtheme) *Toxic online communication* is observed in 47% (N=7) of the participants because they have experienced bullying or verbal attacks, and part of the participants 20% (3) claims that they use invented forms of linguistic aggression (swear words). The result analysis through the code (subtheme) *Physical health consequences* confirms that 47% (N=7) of the participants notice pain in the back, eyes, head and sleep disorders. An in-depth analysis of the participants’ responses confirms the code (subtheme) *Debunking the myth: violence in games causes aggression* according to the responses provided by 53% (N=8) of the participants. Namely, the participants explicitly reject the connection between gaming and real-life violence. Certain participants do not consider it an issue but rather a part of what is assumed when playing such games.

**TABLE 3**  
TIME MANAGEMENT

THEMATIC UNIT: TIME MANAGEMENT	
CODE (SUBTHEME)	PARTICIPANTS' STATEMENTS
TIME HABITS	P1: I used to play for 6 to 7 hours. P6: I play only if I have enough free time. P15: Moderate daily gaming of several hours that fits in with my other responsibilities.
TIME CONTROL ISSUES	P9: Sometimes I would play for too long, which would affect my sleep. P12: I have experience with excessive gaming. P14: I have no method of organising my free time. P10: To me, gaming is escape from other responsibilities. P15: Although I am aware that sometimes my whole day flies by as I am gaming.
TIME REGULATION FACTORS	P8: I always give priority to my responsibilities. P9: Apart from games, I watch basketball and exercise in my free time. P7: Academic responsibilities limit my gaming time. P2: My social circles influenced me to play a certain game too much.

**TABLE 4**  
CONSEQUENCES OF GAMING

THEMATIC UNIT: CONSEQUENCES OF GAMING	
CODE (SUBTHEME)	PARTICIPANTS' STATEMENTS
TOXIC ONLINE COMMUNICATION	P3: If someone is a bad player, everyone will insult them in the chat. P11: I have encountered negative communication, such as bullying. P14: I have played toxic games and have been toxic myself. P2: You start making up new swear words and insults. P12: I am more inclined to insult others, but only in game.
PHYSICAL HEALTH CONSEQUENCES	P2: It affected my back a lot. P4: Looking at the screen has caused me headaches and back pain several times. P6: I have noticed that gaming sometimes disrupted my sleep. P13: Stress after losses and disrupted sleep schedule.
DEBUNKING THE MYTH: VIOLENCE IN GAMES CAUSES AGGRESSION	P1: It is not true that gaming causes aggression. P5: I have become desensitized to violence, but only to violence in games. P9: From personal experience, I can say that gaming has influenced my behaviour and attitude, especially when I was younger. P10: I consider violence in games to be a standard part of a game, so I do not even notice it.

## Discussion

The research result analysis supports the first research question related to the causes and ways of beginning of gaming among long-term gamers, providing insight into multiple factors that influence the initiation of this form of media activity. The thematic analysis of the content of the first unit through five key codes: initiation, social factors, emotional experience, types of games and technological context provide insight into a complex image of the development of gaming experience during childhood and adolescence of long-term gamers. The results confirm the complexity and variability of initiation, which is not homogeneous, but rather conditioned by individual and contextual factors. The analysis of social factors shows that the family is the most important context for initiating gaming, which confirms the role of the family environment as a key socialization unit in which children learn their first habits and gain access to technology. The emotional component manifests itself as an important motivational factor for gaming. The results confirm the multidimensional nature of the emotional experience of gaming, which, in addition to entertainment, can also have a social function. The context of technology plays an important role at the very beginning of gaming, with consoles emerging as the dominant medium in initial gaming, which may be related to their accessibility and social acceptance. The interactive nature of games may have a more significant impact compared to certain other types of media, especially among younger children (up to approximately 12 years of age) who acquire values and develop ideas through narratives and learn through their own actions<sup>19</sup>.

The result analysis supports the second research question that examines the communication and social aspects of communication caused by gaming. The results indicate positive and complex impacts of video games in regard to

the development of communication and social skills among long-term players. The immersive nature of gaming as a context for language learning is confirmed, whereby a language is not the goal, but a means of achieving gaming goals. Croatian gamers prefer using the English language in games because they are used to English gaming phrases, which can affect the perception of the native language in a gaming context<sup>20</sup>. It is considered important to state that the results show that gaming slang for some of the participants is moving from online to everyday communication, which indicates the hybridization of language and the creation of a specific gaming subculture. It also emphasises the concern that the use of the English language may negatively affect the quality of the Croatian language in writing and speaking. Anonymity and distance from a real person reduce the fear of evaluation, allowing the participants to develop communication skills in a low-risk context. The obtained results support the social learning theory<sup>21</sup>, whereby complex social skills are acquired through observation and simulation in a virtual environment. Video games facilitate the formation of new relationships and friendships based on common interests, where the virtual space becomes a place to find similar affinities. This is especially important for individuals who may experience difficulties in real social contexts.

The results of the thematic content analysis answering the third research question regarding the existence of control and time management skills among members of Generation Z while gaming identified three key codes: time habits, time control issues, and time regulation factors that indicate the developmental dynamics of players' time management from childhood to adolescence. The results show a characteristic developmental pattern of time habits. Intensive gaming lasting several hours is dominant in early childhood, reflecting the typical impulsivity and lack of responsibilities in that period, while moderate gaming

is reported by 47% (N=7) of participants, however, only in older age when they become aware of the need to balance between their responsibilities and free time. The transition from intensive to moderate/sporadic gaming represents the natural cognitive evolution of Generation Z.

Time control issues answer the third research question, noting that 53% (N=8) of participants experience time control and management issues most frequently during adolescence. A particularly interesting phenomenon is observed in 33% (N=5) of participants, where specific games create a “flow” state or a hypnotic attraction, resulting in time distortion. This finding confirms Csikszentmihalyi’s flow theory<sup>22</sup> according to which optimal challenge and skill create a state of complete immersion, resulting in players losing track of time. Although adolescence represents a critical period for control issues (53%), a significant proportion of the participants successfully develop self-regulation through maturation (47%) and external structure (33%).

The fourth research question investigated the consequences of long-term exposure to video games among members of generation Z. The result analysis of the thematic unit *Consequences of gaming* identified three key codes (subthemes): *Toxic online communication*, *Physical health consequences* and *Debunking the myth: Violence in games causes aggression* that offer a differentiated image of real risks versus media narratives. Toxic online communication was reported by 47% (N=7) of participants who experienced bullying or verbal attacks in the gaming environment. This is a legitimate problem that confirms the phenomenon of online disinhibition<sup>23</sup>, where anonymity and distance reduce social inhibitions, enabling aggressive communication patterns that are restrained in real life. This is especially evident in multi-player games where players display toxic behaviour due to dissociative anonymity<sup>24</sup>. The results also confirm the invention of new forms of linguistic aggression (swear words, insults etc.), indicating a creative, but destructive, adaptation of language in a toxic environment. There is a noticeable effect on physical health consequences, which is identified in 47% (N=7) of participants that are not specific exclusively to video games but are characteristic of all long-term exposure to screens (studying, working, streaming).

The above research results confirm the basic premises of the cultivation theory<sup>25</sup> through the code (subtheme) *Debunking the myth: Violence in games causes aggression*.

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The most significant result is that the myth has been debunked by 53% (N=8) of participants who explicitly reject the connection between playing violent games and real-life violence. This is because players perceive violence as an integrated part of the gaming experience<sup>26</sup>.

### *Research limitations and implications*

Research limitations are reflected in two indicators. The retrospective self-assessment of the participants, which may be coloured by maturation during the examination and interview, is considered a partial limitation. In addition, the research participants are exclusively male, which prevents the consideration of both sexes. The aforementioned limitations do not affect the objectivity of the research and its contribution. The research shows that video games represent a complex socialization context that contributes to the development of communication skills, but carries the risks of toxic communication and time distortion.

## Conclusion

The obtained research results show that the beginning of gaming is a multidimensional process in which individual, social, emotional and technological factors act simultaneously. The early beginning of gaming within the family environment and through social connections highlights the need for further exploration of parental influence and peer dynamics in designing preventive and incentive programs for a healthy gaming experience. Video games are not just fun activities, but also constitute an important social and communication developmental context that contributes to the formation of complex social skills in the digital age. It can be concluded that Generation Z demonstrates time management skills that develop through maturation and external structure.

Long-term exposure to video games in Generation Z results in two legitimate problems (toxic communication (47%) and physical health consequences (47%)) and one debunked myth (violence in games causes aggression (53%)). The majority of Generation Z shows resistance to media cultivation effects, but requires systematic interventions to address real-world issues. This paper suggests the need for further research examining the longitudinal effects of language skills and social competence and compare virtual and social outcomes among long-term gamers.

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## **VIRTUALNE IGRE KAO KOMUNIKACIJSKI KONTEKST GENERACIJE Z**

### **SAŽETAK**

Novi mediji razvili su sofisticirane oblike, vrste virtualnih igara koji su postaju nezaobilazni dio svakodnevnice slobodnog vremena suvremenog društva. Njihova zastupljenost omogućuje raznovrsne oblike socijalizacije i komunikacije, ali nose rizike poput socijalne izolacije i ovisnosti. Cilj istraživanja u ovom radu ispitati je kako višegodišnje igranje utječe na komunikacijske vještine, upravljanje vremenom i socijalne interakcije kod pripadnika generacije Z. U transverzalnog kvalitativnom istraživanju sudjelovalo je 15 višegodišnjih igrača generacije Z. Podaci prikupljeni polustrukturiranim intervjuima obrađeni su tematskom analizom sadržaja uz induktivno kodiranje i triangulaciju tri istraživača. Istraživanje pruža dubinski uvid u kompleksne odnose između virtualnog igranja, komunikacije i socijalizacije.