



Correlation of Free Fire Online Game Playing Intensity with Elementary School Students' Social and Emotional Intelligence

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to know the relationship between the intensity of playing the online game Free Fire with the social intelligence and emotional intelligence of elementary school students. The method used is a quantitative approach with a correlational design (ex post facto). The study population included all students in grades III to VI at SD Negeri 1 and SD Negeri 3 Bangkleyan, with a sample size of 200 students determined through a total sampling technique. Data were collected using a closed-ended Likert-scale questionnaire that had been tested for validity and reliability. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test, and the Spearman Rho correlation test using SPSS. The results of the normality test showed that the data were not normally distributed. The correlation analysis showed a positive and significant relationship between the intensity of playing Free Fire with social intelligence ($r = 0.707$; $p < 0.05$) and emotional intelligence ($r = 0.657$; $p < 0.05$) with a strong relationship level. These findings emphasize the importance of the role of parents and teachers in supervising gaming activities to have a positive impact on children's development.

1. Introduction

Technological developments in the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era have been rapid and have brought significant changes to people's lives, including those of elementary school-aged children. One example of this technological advancement is the use of mobile phones, which function not only as a communication tool but also as a medium for entertainment through online game applications (Iswatiningsih et al, 2021). Online games have become a popular activity for children because they are easily accessible, interactive, and allow players to communicate and interact with other users without the constraints of space and time (Agus Dwiwana, 2019). The integration of digital technology into students' daily activities has increasingly

influenced learning engagement and behavioral interaction patterns in elementary school environments (Mutmainnah et al., 2025).

Online games are internet-based games played through digital devices such as mobile phones or computers (Armiandeni et al., 2023). Online games also facilitate communication with other players worldwide through chat. Playing online games provides psychological satisfaction, but they are designed to keep players curious and chasing high scores, often leading to forgetting time and rest. Excessive play can lead to psychological disorders and an obsession with winning. One popular online game among elementary school children is Free Fire. According to CNN Indonesia data, Free Fire tops the list as the game with the most downloads in Indonesia, making it the most widely played game by children. This high level of interest has led to increased gaming intensity, both in terms of frequency and duration. The presence of engaging digital environments requires proper supervision so that children's interaction with technology contributes positively to their behavioral and learning development (Syaira & Meilana, 2025).

Intensity is the level or measure of intensity. According to Chaplin, intensity has three meanings: (1) a quantitative characteristic of a sensory experience, related to the intensity of its stimulus; (2) the strength of a behavior or experience; and (3) the strength supporting an opinion or attitude. High levels of online gaming have the potential to lead to addiction, known as internet addictive disorder, especially if not accompanied by adequate supervision. Therefore, managing children's interaction intensity with digital environments becomes an important aspect of supporting balanced cognitive and socio-emotional development in elementary education contexts (Nurhasanah et al., 2025).

One aspect of development experienced by children is social and emotional development. During elementary school, students begin to communicate with peers, interact in healthy competitive situations, form closer friendships, learn to be independent, and demonstrate the ability to share with others (Ardilani & Wulandari, 2022). Social intelligence is the enhancement of a person's capacity for social interaction or interaction with others through behavioral modification or the achievement of maturity in social relationships (Nurhasanah et al., 2021). Social intelligence relates to a child's ability to interact, empathize, cooperate, and establish positive social relationships with their surroundings (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Meanwhile, someone with social intelligence can be identified through ten indicators: understanding expression, empathy for others' feelings, assessing emotional turmoil, emotional management skills, evaluation skills, assessing motivation, encouraging cooperation, understanding the dynamics of social relationships, establishing positive relationships, and understanding feelings (Saragi & Nugrahanta, 2023). Personality characteristics also influence students' ability to regulate behavior and interact socially in structured learning environments (Rini et al., 2025).

Emotional intelligence is the ability to inspire oneself and overcome frustration, control impulses and avoid overindulgence, regulate mood, empathize, and socialize. A person's emotional intelligence can be influenced by various factors,

including genetics (temperament), family environment (parenting patterns), and emotional education received at school (Febrindah et al., 2020). Emotional intelligence encompasses a child's ability to understand, manage, and express emotions appropriately, which plays a significant role in learning success and social adjustment. Meanwhile, elementary school students' emotional development includes their ability to express their reactions to others and control their own emotions (Tusyana et al., 2019). Social and emotional development are two interrelated and inseparable aspects of a child's growth and development. Emotional intelligence also contributes significantly to personality formation and behavioral adjustment within structured learning environments (Kalsum & Sirozi, 2025).

The World Health Organization (WHO) reported in 2017 that 5% to 25% of school-age children experience emotional developmental challenges, out of a total population of 23,979,000. Approximately 11% to 15% of children experience difficulty controlling their emotions, approximately 9% experience anxiety challenges, and 9% to 15% experience behavioral challenges (Fanny et al., 2023). Based on the 2018 Basic Health Research (Riskesdas), the total development of children aged 4-6 years in Indonesia reached 88.3% with the total social-emotional development reaching 69.9%, physical development reaching 97.8%, and development of writing and reading reached 64.6%. Seeing this problem, researchers were interested in further examining it in a study entitled "The Relationship Between the Intensity of Free Fire Online Games and the Social and Emotional Intelligence of Elementary School Children." It is hoped that this research will provide broader insights into the impacts, causal factors, and solutions that can be implemented to mitigate the negative impacts of online games among elementary school students.

Several previous studies have explored various aspects of this issue, which provides the foundation for this study. For example, excessive intensity of playing the Free Fire online game can negatively impact children's social and emotional intelligence, such as the emergence of uncontrolled emotions and reduced direct social interaction (Azis & Hidayat, 2022). However, team-based games also have the potential to have positive impacts, such as fostering cooperation and communication, when played in a controlled manner. Similarly, Murjana et al, (2023) conducted a literature review and found that playing Free Fire games has a significant influence on children's character development.

Although these studies address ethics or social behavior, very little attention has been paid to the simultaneous relationship between gadgets and communication ethics and communication styles in social interactions at the elementary school level. There has been no specific quantitative-comparative study that investigates these two variables simultaneously. This study aims to fill this identified gap by addressing several primary objectives. The primary objective is to determine the relationship between gadget use and students' communication ethics in social interactions. The secondary objective is to determine the relationship between gadget use and students' communication styles in social interactions. Finally, this study will quantitatively compare the ethics and communication styles of students with high and low levels of gadget use. These findings are expected to provide a

comprehensive picture of the impact of gadgets and serve as an empirical basis for developing appropriate strategies for parents, teachers, and schools.

2. Methodology

Research Design

The research design used in this thesis is a quantitative study with a correlational approach (ex post facto). The ex post facto correlational approach was chosen because the researcher did not provide treatment or manipulation to the variables, but rather studied the existing relationship between the intensity of playing the online game Free Fire and the social and emotional intelligence of elementary school students. Quantitative methods allow for the collection of objective and measurable numerical data from the sample through standardized questionnaires, which allows for statistical analysis and generalization of the findings. This method ensures that the results are objective, measurable, and their validity and reliability can be tested statistically.

Participants and sampling

This research was conducted at an elementary school in Blora, a location chosen due to its relevance to the research topic. Data were collected during October, aligning with the school's busy academic schedule. The study population consisted of all students in grades III, IV, V, and VI at the school, defined as the entire group from which the research conclusions are generalized. A sample of 200 students was selected from this population. A sample is defined as a subset of the population that shares the characteristics of that population. The sampling technique used was Stratified Random Sampling. This technique involves dividing the population into homogeneous subgroups (strata) and then randomly selecting samples from each stratum. This method was chosen because the population consists of three different grade levels.

Data Collection and Instruments

Research data was collected through a closed-ended questionnaire structured on a rating scale. This instrument was used to obtain quantitative data on the intensity of playing the online game Free Fire, social intelligence, and emotional intelligence of elementary school students. Each statement item was structured based on research variable indicators to objectively describe the respondents' conditions. The questionnaire was distributed directly to students in grades III, IV, V, and VI, with guidance from the researcher and class teachers to ensure correct completion. The research instrument used a Likert scale with several answer alternatives reflecting the respondents' level of agreement with each statement. Before being used for data collection, the questionnaire was tested for validity and reliability to ensure appropriateness and consistency of measurement. The data obtained were then used to analyze the relationship between the intensity of playing the online game Free Fire and the social and emotional intelligence of elementary school students. The

research instrument was designed to measure three core variables. The questionnaire items used in this study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Questionnaire Items

No.	Variable	Indicator	Questionnaire Item
1	Intensity of Playing Free Fire Online Games (X)	Frequency of playing	I play Free Fire almost every day.
2	Intensity of Playing Free Fire Online Games (X)	Duration of playing	I spend a long time playing Free Fire in one session.
3	Intensity of Playing Free Fire Online Games (X)	Interest in the game	I feel very interested in continuing to play Free Fire.
4	Intensity of Playing Free Fire Online Games (X)	Priority of activity	I prefer playing Free Fire to doing other activities.
5	Intensity of Playing Free Fire Online Games (X)	Self-control in playing	I find it difficult to stop playing Free Fire once I start.
6	Intensity of Playing Free Fire Online Games (X)	Emotional attachment to the game	I feel very happy when playing Free Fire.
7	Social Intelligence (Y1)	Empathy	I can understand my friends' feelings when they are sad.
8	Social Intelligence (Y1)	Cooperation	I like cooperating with my friends in group activities.
9	Social Intelligence (Y1)	Social interaction	I can easily get along with my friends at school.
10	Social Intelligence (Y1)	Understanding others' expressions	I can tell how my friends feel from their facial expressions.
11	Social Intelligence (Y1)	Building positive relationships	I try to maintain good relationships with my friends.
12	Emotional Intelligence (Y2)	Recognizing one's own emotions	I know when I am feeling angry, sad, or happy.
13	Emotional Intelligence (Y2)	Managing emotions	I can calm myself down when I feel angry.
14	Emotional Intelligence (Y2)	Controlling frustration	I do not get easily upset when I lose in a game or activity.
15	Emotional Intelligence (Y2)	Self-motivation	I remain enthusiastic even when I face difficulties.
16	Emotional Intelligence (Y2)	Expressing emotions appropriately	I can express my feelings in a good way.

The questionnaire used a four-point Likert scale, namely: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree. The arrangement of the questionnaire items was adjusted to the indicators of each variable in order to measure students' responses objectively and systematically. The research instrument was designed to measure three core variables:

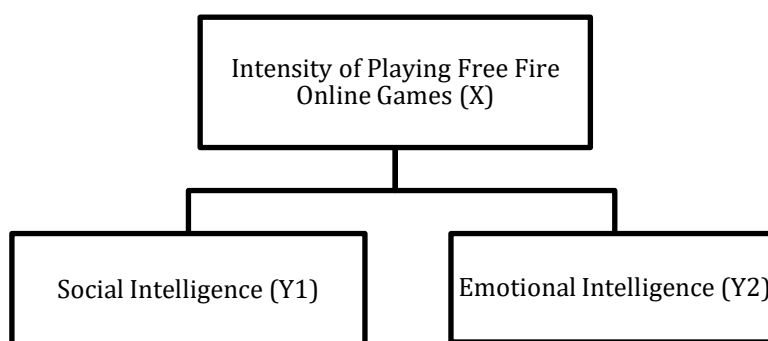


Figure 1. Design Research Instrument

Prior to primary data collection, the research instrument was tested. Validity ensures that the instrument measures what it is intended to measure. Before being used on the primary sample, the instrument underwent a pilot test on a small group of students with similar characteristics outside the research sample. Validity testing was conducted using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation technique with item suitability criteria ($r_{\text{count}} > r_{\text{table}}$). Of the 26 items tested, 16 were declared valid, as the r_{count} values ranged from 0.370 to 0.542, which is greater than the r_{table} (0.361). After the validity test was conducted, the next step was reliability testing.

The reliability test used the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to measure the internal consistency of the instrument. The results of the reliability test showed that all variables were reliable, with Cronbach's Alpha values above the minimum limit of 0.70. Based on the reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha, a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.775 was obtained for 16 items. The Cronbach's Alpha value was $0.775 > 0.70$, thus concluding that the research instrument was reliable. This means that all items in the questionnaire had a good level of consistency and were suitable for measuring the intensity of playing the online game Free Fire, as well as the social and emotional intelligence of elementary school students. Therefore, the instrument was deemed consistently suitable for data collection. Data analysis in this study was conducted through several stages to obtain valid and interpretable results. The initial stage was descriptive statistical analysis, aimed at providing an overview of the research data. At this stage, the average (mean), median, and standard deviation for each variable were calculated to determine the characteristics of the data and the general trend of student responses.

The obtained data were then analyzed using prerequisite tests and hypothesis testing using SPSS version 25. The prerequisite test in this study, the normality test, aimed to determine whether the data were normally distributed. This normality test was conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method. Meanwhile, the research hypothesis was tested using a correlation test and calculated the relationship between variables X and Y using the Spearman Rho test because the data being tested were not normally distributed. Through this analysis stage, the research results can provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the intensity of playing the online game Free Fire and the social and emotional intelligence of elementary school students.

3. Results and Discussion

Statistical Description

This study involved 200 elementary school students from grades III to VI at two public elementary schools, namely Bangkleyan 1 Public Elementary School and Bangkleyan 3 Public Elementary School. The respondents were selected using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure proportional representation from each grade level so that the research data reflected the characteristics of students across different developmental stages in elementary education. Students in this age range are generally between 8 and 12 years old, which is a critical developmental period for strengthening social interaction skills, emotional regulation abilities, and peer relationship patterns. At this stage, children begin to actively engage in cooperative learning activities, peer communication, and digital-based entertainment such as online games. The increasing accessibility of smartphones among elementary school students also contributes to the growing popularity of online games in their daily routines. Therefore, this sample was considered relevant for examining the relationship between online gaming intensity and students' social and emotional intelligence development. The involvement of students from multiple grade levels also strengthens the representativeness of the research sample and supports the reliability of the statistical findings obtained in this study.

Before conducting inferential statistical analysis, descriptive statistical analysis was performed to provide an overview of the distribution of research data and to identify general response trends from participants regarding the intensity of playing the online game Free Fire as well as their levels of social intelligence and emotional intelligence. Descriptive statistics serve as an important preliminary step in quantitative research because they allow researchers to observe patterns of variability, response consistency, and central tendencies within the dataset before proceeding to correlation testing. Through descriptive analysis, researchers can evaluate whether the data obtained are sufficiently distributed to support further statistical procedures. In addition, descriptive statistics also help ensure that the collected data represent actual respondent conditions and are not dominated by extreme values. This stage plays a significant role in strengthening the credibility of subsequent statistical interpretation processes. The results of the descriptive statistical analysis are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
TOTAL	200	16	64	40.00	13.064
Valid N (listwise)	200				

Based on Table 2, the descriptive statistical results indicate that the respondents' total scores ranged between 16 and 64, with an average score of 40.00 and a standard deviation value of 13.064. These results suggest that the responses provided by students varied across a moderate distribution range, indicating the presence of diversity in students' gaming intensity levels and socio-emotional

characteristics. A relatively moderate mean value also reflects that students' responses did not concentrate excessively at either extreme end of the scale, which supports the assumption that the collected data represent realistic behavioral tendencies. Meanwhile, the standard deviation value indicates that the spread of responses was sufficiently varied to allow meaningful statistical interpretation. This variability strengthens the feasibility of conducting correlation analysis between research variables. Overall, the descriptive statistical findings confirm that the dataset obtained in this study is suitable for further prerequisite testing and hypothesis analysis stages.

Before proceeding to hypothesis testing, the research instrument used in this study was first tested for validity and reliability to ensure that it accurately measured the intended research variables. Validity testing was conducted using the Pearson Product Moment correlation technique to determine the extent to which each questionnaire item represented the construct being measured. The results of the validity test showed that all questionnaire items measuring the three research variables, namely online gaming intensity, social intelligence, and emotional intelligence, had correlation coefficients higher than the required r -table value of 0.1388. This indicates that each statement item was capable of measuring the intended variables appropriately and consistently. Meanwhile, reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha produced coefficient values above 0.60 for all variables, indicating that the research instrument demonstrated acceptable internal consistency. These findings confirm that the questionnaire instrument used in this study was both valid and reliable, making it appropriate for collecting accurate quantitative data to support further statistical analysis.

Respondent Characteristics

The distribution of respondents based on grade level was analyzed to identify the proportion of students participating in the study from each class category and to ensure that the sample reflected a balanced representation of elementary school students across multiple grade levels. Understanding respondent characteristics is important in quantitative research because it allows researchers to evaluate whether the collected data adequately represent the target population. In this study, respondents were drawn from grades III to VI, representing students who were already capable of understanding questionnaire instructions independently and had prior experience interacting socially with peers in both classroom and digital environments. Students at these grade levels generally begin to develop stronger communication abilities, empathy skills, and emotional regulation patterns influenced by peer relationships and extracurricular activities. Additionally, their familiarity with mobile technology and digital entertainment platforms makes them suitable participants for research related to online gaming behavior.

Based on Table 3, the largest proportion of respondents came from Grade IV students, totaling 56 students or 28.0% of the overall sample. This was followed by Grade VI students with 50 participants (25.0%), Grade V students with 48 participants (24.0%), and Grade III students with 46 participants (23.0%). The relatively balanced distribution of respondents across grade levels indicates that the

sampling technique successfully ensured proportional representation of students from different academic stages. The distribution of respondents based on grade level is presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Respondent Frequency Distribution by Class

Grade Level	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Grade 3	46	23.0	23.0	23.0
Grade 4	56	28.0	28.0	51.0
Grade 5	48	24.0	24.0	75.0
Grade 6	50	25.0	25.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

This balanced composition strengthens the representativeness of the research findings and allows broader interpretation of the relationship between gaming intensity and socio-emotional intelligence across elementary school grade levels. Furthermore, the diversity of respondents' grade levels provides a more comprehensive understanding of how students' developmental characteristics interact with their digital gaming behavior. Therefore, the respondent distribution supports the reliability of the statistical analysis conducted in this study.

Questionnaire Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process in this study was conducted using a structured questionnaire based on a Likert-scale measurement format designed to measure three main variables, namely online gaming intensity, social intelligence, and emotional intelligence. The questionnaire was distributed directly to students during school hours with assistance from classroom teachers to ensure that respondents clearly understood the instructions provided by the researchers. Before completing the questionnaire, students were given explanations regarding the purpose of the study, how to respond to each statement item honestly, and the importance of providing answers that reflected their actual experiences rather than socially desirable responses. This step was intended to minimize response bias and improve data accuracy. The questionnaire instrument had previously undergone pilot testing on students with similar characteristics outside the research sample to ensure its validity and reliability prior to large-scale data collection. During the administration process, researchers also monitored the completion procedure to ensure that all questionnaire items were answered independently without external influence from peers. After all questionnaires were collected, the responses were coded and processed using SPSS statistical software to conduct descriptive statistical analysis, prerequisite testing, and correlation testing between research variables.

4. Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the relationship between the intensity of playing the online game *Free Fire* and the social intelligence and emotional intelligence of

elementary school students. The results indicate that there is a meaningful relationship between online gaming intensity and students' social and emotional development. These findings answer the research question by showing that online gaming activities do not always produce negative effects on children. Instead, when managed appropriately and supported by guidance from parents and teachers, online games can contribute to strengthening communication skills, cooperation, emotional control, and peer interaction among elementary school students. This demonstrates that the research objectives were successfully achieved and that the study provides relevant evidence regarding the role of digital game use in supporting socio-emotional development in primary education settings. However, this study still has several limitations related to the use of questionnaire-based data collection and the relatively limited scope of research participants, which may affect the generalization of findings to broader populations. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve more diverse samples and combine quantitative approaches with interviews or observations to obtain deeper insights. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of active supervision and balanced time management in children's gaming activities so that online games can function as supportive learning media rather than sources of distraction. Through collaboration between schools and families, the positive potential of digital games can be directed toward strengthening students' character and social-emotional competence in a responsible and educational manner

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