



## Digital Game Addiction From Early Childhood Preservice Teachers Perspective

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The rapid spread of technology has made it easier for children to access technology such as computers, phones and tablets and has made possible them to use these technologies frequently. When the games, which has advanced visual and auditory features are considered, overtime technology has become a dominant tool for children. Children who spend time constantly with technology find themselves in playing games more. With some other factors, this causes some risky situations. Game addiction is at the top of these risks. In consideration of latest findings on game addiction, World Health Organization declared game addiction as a disorder. Especially early age children carry more risks on game addiction and effected more from consequences. In this respect, to gain information about how to prevent game addiction and get children restrained habit of playing games, one of the biggest responsibility belongs to early childhood teachers. To increase early childhood teachers' awareness about games and game addiction, they need to be informed before graduation.

This study aims to reveal the perceptions of early childhood teachers about the reasons for game addiction and to investigate the relationships among the reasons. Phenomenology was used as research design. 55 pre-service teachers who are in the first grade in Department of Early Childhood Education in a public university were participated in study. Data were collected via open-ended questions on an online form. Content analysis was used to analyze data. In coding process, first in vivo coding was used and then axial coding performed. Two different researchers carried out the coding process independently. In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings, the findings obtained by the researchers were compared and the inter-researcher consistency was examined. In addition, findings were supported with quotations, and relationships between findings described in detail.

As result of the analysis, findings gather in four themes. These themes are child, parent, environment and game. The sub-themes of the child theme are finding the imaginary world, age characteristics, enjoyment, lack of socialization and lack of self-confidence. Being a bad role model, technology as a saver, lack of knowledge, lack of control and carelessness are sub-themes of parent. While bad urbanization, insecurity in the streets and digital world are sub-themes of environment theme, there are two sub-themes in game theme such as attractiveness of the games and physiological effect. After the themes and sub-themes were determined, the relations between the themes and sub-themes were tried to be revealed according to pre-service teachers' opinions. These relations were examined in eight different



aspects. These aspects are parent, child, game, parent and child, parent and environment, parent and game, child and game and child and environment. The most emphasized aspects of the relations by pre-service teachers were parent, parent and child, child and game respectively. In parent aspect, parents’ carelessness for their children was one of the most pointed out behavior that lead to game addiction. Addition to this, if the parents who are careless for their children are also don’t have enough knowledge about creating environments for their children’s development may cause game addiction. According to pre-service teachers’ opinions on parent and child aspect, children’s lack of socialization lead them to play digital games. This behavior occurs because of parents who are careless and see technology as a saver. Parents are also being a bad role model to their children by using technology often. Early-aged children learn by imitations and curiosity, thus children who see their parents using technology all the time spend most of their time to use technology. This may cause game addiction. The most remarkable finding in child and game aspect is that the attractiveness of games are related to the age characteristic of children. According to pre-service teachers, early-age children are curios and at game age. Games which have attractive features both visual and auditory lead students to play. In this situation, children may come up with game addiction risk.

In literature, game addiction is discussed with different aspects. In this study, findings were discussed according to literature and suggestions are presented. In particular, it can be said that the early-age children at 0-7 age should be educated about game addiction by both parent and early childhood teachers in a controlled way. In this context, it is suggested that early childhood education curriculums should involve contents related to game addiction.

**Keywords:** Game addiction, early childhood, pre-service teachers, digital games