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Preventive Guidance and Counseling as a Risk Reduction for Problematic Online Gaming in Students

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify indications of problematic online gaming and examine preventive guidance and counseling practices at SMP Negeri 2 Belik. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the study involved two informants: one guidance and counseling teacher (JU) and one student (RE). Data were obtained through individual interviews and supported by observational information concerning gaming-related habits and school participation. The findings indicate that RE's gaming participation was influenced by peers and accompanied by difficulties controlling playing time, occasional late-night gaming, classroom sleepiness, and tardiness. The counseling teacher also reported recurring absenteeism and described existing school responses, including weekly classical guidance on time management, individual counseling for discipline-related concerns, and collaboration with homeroom teachers and parents. The study contributes a contextual understanding of how gaming-related concerns intersect with school counseling practices and proposes a relational preventive framework integrating self-awareness, self-regulation, coping skills, digital literacy, alternative activities, and environmental support. The proposed framework is conceptual rather than an intervention implemented and evaluated in full. Consequently, the study cannot determine whether counseling services reduce problematic online gaming risks.

1. INTRODUCTION

Technological advances have made the internet an important part of adolescents' daily lives, particularly for accessing information, communicating, and engaging in recreational activities such as online gaming (Hasanah et al., 2026; Kurniawan et al., 2026; Musonif, Novikasari, et al., 2026; Rizal et al., 2026). Although online games provide entertainment and social interaction, difficulties in regulating gaming activities may interfere with educational responsibilities and daily routines. Fahrul & Nurfarhanah (2025) discussed the potential impacts of online gaming addiction among junior high school students, emphasizing the importance of addressing gaming habits that may disrupt daily functioning. Accordingly, online gaming requires educational attention when students experience difficulties managing their participation. Problematic online gaming cannot be identified solely by playing duration or frequency. Extended gaming does not necessarily indicate problematic behavior when students remain capable of managing their responsibilities. However, repeated difficulties stopping play, regulating gaming time, and maintaining daily activities may require further attention (Azis et al., 2026; Musonif et al., 2026; Pranoto et al., 2026). Widyaningrum et al. (2023) examined factors associated with online gaming addiction among adolescents, while Sugara et al. (2024) discussed a cognitive behavioral approach to internet gaming addiction problems. These studies emphasize the relevance of behavioral regulation. Therefore, problematic online gaming in this study refers to potential gaming-related difficulties that may interfere with students' daily functioning rather than a clinically established diagnosis. Adolescents require guidance in developing self-control, managing time, and balancing recreational activities with educational responsibilities.

Inadequate behavioral regulation may disrupt daily routines, including sufficient rest and regular school participation. Damayanti et al. (2023) examined the influence of online gaming intensity on students' learning discipline, while Wijaya et al. (2024) investigated the influence of online gaming addiction on learning concentration among junior high school students. Nevertheless, school discipline and learning difficulties should not automatically be attributed to online gaming because personal, family, and educational circumstances may also influence these conditions. School-based guidance and counseling should therefore consider the broader context of students' behavior.

Previous research has examined gaming-related educational consequences and counseling interventions. Damayanti et al. (2023) and Wijaya et al. (2024) focused on gaming-related difficulties in learning contexts, while Setyowati et al. (2023) investigated group counseling using self-management techniques to reduce online gaming addiction. Dwizar & Nasution (2024) discussed guidance and counseling using self-control techniques to address similar problems. Although these studies emphasize behavioral regulation from different perspectives, they do not fully explain how students' reported gaming difficulties are interpreted and addressed through existing counseling practices within a specific school context. Studies have also examined school-based guidance and counseling services. Hasibuan et al. (2025) discussed classical guidance as a preventive and curative approach to online gaming addiction among junior high school students, while Nurrohmah et al. (2024) examined counseling services intended to reduce online gaming addiction. Fakhrozi et al. (2023) investigated the role of guidance and counseling teachers in addressing similar problems. These studies demonstrate that preventive counseling is not an entirely new concept. However, differences in research settings, counseling practices, and analytical emphases provide opportunities to examine the interconnectedness of students' gaming difficulties, existing counseling responses, and preventive service development within specific educational contexts. Individual behavioral regulation and environmental support also provide a basis for understanding preventive counseling. Bawamenewi & Syaimi (2025) examined the relationship between self-control and online gaming addiction, while Purwaningrum et al. (2023) discussed collaboration between guidance and counseling teachers and parents. Yuniar & Irfan (2024) examined collaborative parent–teacher intervention in preventing online gaming addiction. Although individual capacities and environmental support are relevant, their integration does not necessarily establish preventive effectiveness. Their relevance must be interpreted through students' experiences and counseling practices within the research setting. The research gap concerns the need for a context-specific understanding of how indications of problematic online gaming are identified and addressed through existing school guidance and counseling practices. Although previous studies have examined educational consequences, self-control techniques, classical guidance, and school–family collaboration, this study interprets the relationships among these dimensions within SMP Negeri 2 Belik. It focuses on students' reported gaming regulation difficulties, school discipline concerns, and existing counseling services as a basis for developing preventive support rather than measuring intervention effectiveness.

Preliminary information obtained at SMP Negeri 2 Belik supports this research focus. An interview with student RE on October 16, 2026, revealed that participation in online gaming, particularly Free Fire, was influenced by peer invitations. RE reported difficulties stopping gaming activities, occasionally playing late at night, experiencing classroom sleepiness, and arriving late at school. An interview with guidance and counseling teacher JU on November 16, 2026, indicated that repeated school absences were among the behavioral concerns addressed through individual counseling. The school also provided classical guidance on time management and collaborated with homeroom teachers and parents in addressing discipline-related difficulties. These accounts highlight the relevance of behavioral regulation, school participation, and environmental support without establishing a direct causal relationship between online gaming and discipline problems. The

contribution of this study lies in its contextual interpretation of preventive guidance and counseling practices in relation to students' reported gaming difficulties. Unlike studies primarily concerned with measuring gaming addiction, examining educational consequences, or evaluating counseling techniques, this study emphasizes the relationship between students' experiences, existing counseling responses, and preventive service development. It proposes a relational framework integrating risk identification, self-awareness, digital literacy, self-regulation, coping skills, alternative activities, environmental support, and monitoring. These components represent a conceptual direction for strengthening preventive counseling rather than an empirically validated intervention model. Thus, its contribution lies in organizing context-specific empirical findings into a structured perspective rather than introducing an entirely new counseling technique. Accordingly, this study aims to identify indications of problematic online gaming and describe preventive guidance and counseling practices at SMP Negeri 2 Belik. It also seeks to interpret the relationship between gaming-related difficulties, school discipline concerns, and existing counseling support as a basis for proposing a relational framework for preventive service development. Through a descriptive qualitative approach, this study provides a contextually grounded understanding without claiming intervention effectiveness or behavioral changes that were not measured.

2. METHODE

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach (Sandelowski, 2000) to explore problematic online gaming risks, behavioral regulation, school discipline, and preventive guidance and counseling at SMP Negeri 2 Belik, Indonesia, without diagnosing gaming disorder or measuring behavioral changes. Data were collected during October–November 2026 from two informants selected for their relevance: student RE and guidance and counseling teacher JU, representing complementary experiential and professional perspectives (Malterud et al., 2016). Semi-structured interviews, supported by observational information, followed reporting principles of transparency and contextual description (Tong et al., 2007). RE was interviewed on October 16, 2026, at 09:32 (4 minutes 33 seconds), addressing Free Fire, gaming frequency, duration, peer influence, self-regulation, and school participation. JU was interviewed on November 16, 2026, at 09:42 (9 minutes 38 seconds), addressing discipline, classical guidance, individual counseling, time management, counselor–homeroom teacher–parent collaboration, and digital supervision challenges. Observational information covered gaming habits, frequency, duration, school discipline, classroom concentration, and peer interaction. Home gaming and peer motivations were self-reported; teacher accounts concerning attendance, counseling, and family communication lacked independent documentary verification. The research procedure comprised focus identification, informant selection, data collection, analysis, and context-specific conclusions and counseling implications (Figure 1).

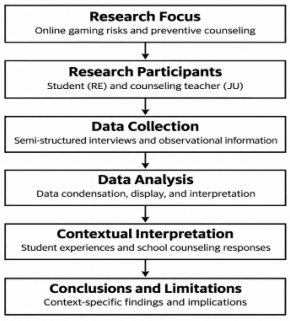


Figure 1. Research Procedure for Exploring Problematic Online Gaming Risks and Preventive Guidance and Counseling Practices

Data analysis followed Miles et al. (2014): data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Meaningful statements were organized into four categories: peer influence

on gaming habits, gaming-related self-regulation difficulties, school discipline concerns, and preventive guidance and counseling responses. Informant perspectives were compared, distinguishing reported experiences, researcher interpretations, and proposed counseling development. Trustworthiness was considered through consistency, differences, and contextual relevance across informant accounts. Two informants, brief interviews, and absent independently verified pre–post behavioral measurements limited interpretation. Findings provide contextual insights for preventive service development without establishing generalizability, causal relationships, or counseling effectiveness, considering other possible personal, family, and educational influences.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Online Game Habits Among Students

Based on an interview conducted on October 16, 2026, RE reported regularly playing Free Fire after school, generally between 3:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m., occasionally continuing late into the night. Gaming participation was influenced by invitations from friends, indicating that online gaming represented both recreational activity and social participation. Bawamenewi & Syaimi (2025) examined self-control in relation to online gaming addiction, while Widyaningrum et al. (2023) discussed factors associated with adolescent gaming addiction. Peer influence emerged as a contextual factor encouraging RE's gaming participation without establishing an independent causal relationship with problematic behavior. RE also reported losing track of time, experiencing difficulties stopping play, and becoming accustomed to gaming. These experiences indicate potential difficulties in behavioral regulation, particularly when gaming exceeds intended schedules. Haryono et al. (2022) examined loneliness and self-control in relation to adolescent online gaming addiction, while Marista (2022) discussed self-control among adolescent gaming enthusiasts. These perspectives support interpreting RE's experiences as indications of gaming-related risks rather than a clinically established gaming disorder, given the absence of standardized diagnostic assessment. RE reported classroom sleepiness and school tardiness, which were also identified in the available observational information. During an interview on November 16, 2026, JU reported repeated school absences, sometimes once or twice weekly. Irman & Morika (2022) discussed online gaming addiction and adolescent sleep quality, while Damayanti et al. (2023) examined gaming intensity and learning discipline. These studies provide a basis for interpreting sleep-related and disciplinary concerns alongside gaming habits. Nevertheless, online gaming cannot be established as the sole cause of these difficulties because personal, family, and educational circumstances may also contribute.

JU explained that discipline problems were primarily identified through attendance and behavioral patterns. Students experiencing repeated absences received individual counseling to explore underlying circumstances, while academic achievement information was generally obtained through subject teachers and homeroom teachers. Wijaya et al. (2024) examined gaming addiction and learning concentration, while Fahrul & Nurfarhanah (2025) discussed gaming-related impacts among junior high school students. Although educational functioning remains relevant, RE's academic achievement and concentration were not directly measured. These findings suggest that problematic gaming risks cannot be determined solely by playing duration or frequency. The primary concern involves the interaction between peer influence, behavioral regulation difficulties, and school discipline rather than gaming participation itself. This interpretation distinguishes ordinary recreational gaming from potentially problematic behavioral patterns (Widyaningrum et al., 2023), providing a contextual foundation for preventive counseling emphasizing self-awareness, time management, and responsible digital behavior.

Implementation of Preventive Guidance and Counseling

JU reported that guidance and counseling services at SMP Negeri 2 Belik include weekly classical guidance, individual counseling, and cooperation with homeroom teachers and parents. Classical guidance addresses time allocation, prioritization, and the consequences of ineffective time management. Students are permitted to play online games provided that gaming does not interfere with educational responsibilities, reflecting responsible behavioral management rather than prohibition. Hasibuan et al. (2025) discussed classical guidance as a preventive and curative approach to online gaming addiction, while Nurrohmah et al. (2024) examined counseling services intended to reduce gaming addiction. However, the present findings establish the reported implementation of time-management guidance rather than a comprehensive gaming-specific prevention program. Individual counseling is provided to students experiencing discipline problems, including repeated absences, to identify underlying circumstances and provide appropriate guidance. Nasution & Nasution (2024) discussed individual counseling using self-management techniques to improve student discipline. Nevertheless, structured self-management interventions were not verified as having been systematically implemented with RE. Classical guidance and individual counseling serve complementary functions by providing general behavioral guidance and exploring individual circumstances. Dwizar & Nasution (2024) examined self-control techniques in addressing gaming addiction, while Setyowati et al. (2023) investigated group counseling using self-management techniques. These studies inform preventive service development without establishing equivalent outcomes at SMP Negeri 2 Belik, where behavioral changes following counseling were not evaluated. Based on the empirical findings and relevant literature, this study proposes a relational framework integrating individual protective capacities and environmental support (Bawamenewi & Syaimi, 2025; Dwizar & Nasution, 2024; Firnanda & Wiyono, 2022; Setyowati et al., 2023). Chen et al. (2023) reviewed gaming disorder interventions, providing broader considerations for structured intervention development. The following eight components represent conceptual recommendations rather than empirically evaluated interventions at the research location.

Risk Identification and Assessment. Risk identification involves examining gaming patterns, duration, motivations, behavioral regulation difficulties, and interference with educational and social responsibilities to determine appropriate preventive or individualized support. RE's gaming habits and discipline concerns were identified through interviews and observational information without standardized assessment. Increasing Self-Awareness. Self-awareness encourages students to recognize gaming habits, identify triggers of prolonged gaming, and reflect on behavioral consequences. RE's difficulties stopping play and losing track of time indicate the relevance of connecting gaming awareness with daily responsibilities. Digital Literacy Education and Psychoeducation. This component emphasizes responsible technology use, characteristics of problematic gaming, and potential psychological, social, academic, and physical consequences. Although time-management guidance was reported, comprehensive gaming-specific psychoeducation was not established by the available evidence. Development of Self-Regulation. Self-regulation emphasizes time management, impulse control, behavioral boundaries, and educational priorities through proposed strategies such as daily schedules, reasonable gaming limits, and completing school assignments before recreational activities (Bawamenewi & Syaimi, 2025; Dwizar & Nasution, 2024; Marista, 2022). These strategies were not verified as structured interventions implemented with RE. Strengthening Coping Skills. Coping-skills development encourages alternative responses to stress, boredom, emotional difficulties, and peer pressure. However, RE's gaming participation was not established as a coping mechanism for emotional distress. This component therefore represents a potential area for further assessment and preventive counseling. Development of Alternative Activities and Social Relations. Constructive activities,

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including sports, arts, school organizations, family activities, and positive peer interaction, are proposed to encourage balanced daily participation rather than eliminate gaming. Given the peer influence reported by RE, alternative social opportunities may support preventive counseling.. Strengthening Environmental Support (Social Support). Environmental support involves cooperation among guidance counselors, homeroom teachers, parents, family members, and peers to encourage consistent behavioral guidance. Purwaningrum et al. (2023) discussed counselor–parent collaboration, while Yuniar & Irfan (2024) examined collaborative parent–teacher intervention. JU reported existing cooperation with homeroom teachers and parents, although its effectiveness in changing RE's behavior was not evaluated. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Follow-up Monitoring involves reviewing gaming routines, school participation, time management, and behavioral regulation to identify continuing difficulties and determine further counseling needs. However, systematic follow-up measurements and formal evaluations of behavioral changes were not conducted.

The relationship among these proposed components is illustrated in Figure 2.

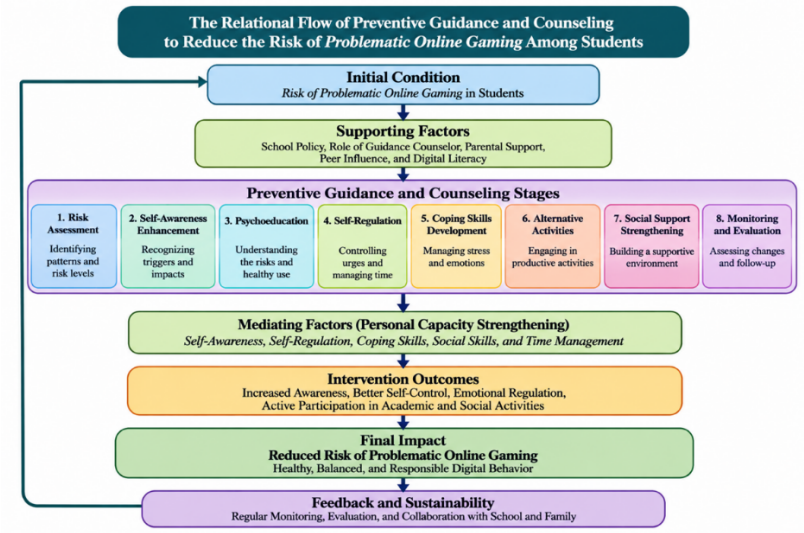


Figure 2. Relational Framework of Preventive Guidance and Counseling for Reducing the Risk of Problematic Online Gaming Among Students

The framework integrates three empirical findings: peer influence on gaming participation, behavioral regulation difficulties alongside school discipline concerns, and existing counseling services addressing time management and student responsibilities. Research on self-control and gaming-related difficulties (Bawamenewi & Syaimi, 2025; Haryono et al., 2022; Marista, 2022) supports individual behavioral regulation, while studies concerning school counseling and collaborative support (Fakhrozi et al., 2023; Purwaningrum et al., 2023; Rachman et al., 2025) emphasize educational and family contexts. Initial conditions include indications of problematic gaming requiring further assessment, while supporting factors encompass school policies, counselors' roles, parental involvement, peer influence, and digital literacy. These contextual factors may facilitate or constrain preventive efforts across school, home, and peer environments. Risk identification, self-awareness, and psychoeducation establish the informational and reflective foundation of prevention. These components connect students' gaming experiences with awareness of behavioral consequences and responsible digital engagement. In RE's case, difficulties stopping play indicate the relevance of integrating behavioral awareness with time-management guidance. Self-regulation, coping skills, and alternative activities strengthen personal capacities through behavioral boundaries, responses to emotional and social pressures, and constructive participation. These components are conceptually related to self-control and self-management approaches (Dwizar

& Nasution, 2024; Nasution & Nasution, 2024; Setyowati et al., 2023), although their relationships have not been empirically tested. Environmental support, monitoring, and feedback provide continuity by encouraging consistent expectations, reviewing behavioral developments, and adapting counseling to students' needs. This orientation aligns with collaborative counseling practices (Purwaningrum et al., 2023; Yuniar & Irfan, 2024). Nevertheless, comprehensive monitoring and evaluation were not established at the research location. The proposed mediating factors include self-awareness, self-regulation, coping skills, social skills, and time management. Expected intermediate outcomes comprise increased gaming awareness, improved behavioral regulation, and balanced academic and social participation, while the potential long-term outcome is reduced problematic gaming risks. These relationships represent conceptual propositions rather than empirically established mediation pathways or demonstrated intervention outcomes. The framework therefore provides a systematic direction for preventive service development requiring further intervention and follow-up studies.

Collaboration between Guidance and Counseling Teachers with Homeroom Teachers and Parents in Overcoming *Online Gaming Problems*

JU reported that cooperation among guidance counselors, homeroom teachers, and parents constitutes an institutional response to repeated discipline problems. Parents may be contacted and invited to discuss students' circumstances, identify solutions, and establish shared responsibilities. Rachman et al. (2025) and Fakhrozi et al. (2023) examined counselors' roles in addressing online gaming addiction, providing relevant perspectives for interpreting these practices. Family collaboration is particularly important because gaming frequently occurs outside school hours, limiting teachers' supervision. JU identified late-night gaming, students living with grandparents, and limited parental supervision as contextual challenges. However, RE's family circumstances were not independently established as causal factors. Purwaningrum et al. (2023) emphasized counselor–parent collaboration, while Yuniar & Irfan (2024) discussed collaborative parent–teacher intervention for gaming prevention. Although JU reported existing collaboration, its frequency, intensity, and behavioral outcomes in RE's case were not established. JU also emphasized school regulations, discipline, and responsible time use. Ningsih & Usmanto (2023) discussed student responsibility through learning discipline, while Mahyatun et al. (2023) examined group guidance using assertive techniques to prevent gaming addiction. These perspectives support behavioral awareness and responsibility, although the present findings describe time-management guidance and discipline-related counseling rather than specialized assertive training. Preventive counseling may integrate individual behavioral support with school–family cooperation through daily schedules, reasonable gaming limits, academic priorities, sufficient rest, and family agreements concerning digital activities. These recommendations align with self-management and collaborative approaches (Nasution & Nasution, 2024; Yuniar & Irfan, 2024) but were not verified as structured activities implemented with RE. Previous research has addressed gaming addiction, self-control, group counseling, and counselors' roles (Dwizar & Nasution, 2024; Firnanda & Wiyono, 2022; Hasibuan et al., 2025; Nurrohmah et al., 2024; Setyowati et al., 2023). Rather than introducing an entirely new counseling technique, this study contributes a contextual interpretation of how peer influence, behavioral regulation difficulties, school discipline, and institutional support intersect. The proposed relational framework organizes individual protective capacities and environmental support into a conceptual direction for systematic preventive services.

Practical implications include integrating gaming-related risk identification into student needs assessments, strengthening time-management education, providing individualized counseling, and improving school–family communication. Additional activities addressing self-regulation, coping skills, digital literacy, and constructive social participation may be developed according to identified

needs. Research concerning gaming-related counseling techniques and interventions provides relevant considerations (Chen et al., 2023; Firnanda & Wiyono, 2022), although implementation should reflect students' circumstances and institutional resources. The findings remain limited by the involvement of one student and one guidance and counseling teacher, relatively brief interviews, and available observational information. Standardized gaming assessments, systematic academic performance measurements, and pre–post behavioral evaluations were not conducted. Consequently, neither existing counseling effectiveness nor the effectiveness of the proposed eight-component framework can be established. Future research should involve more diverse participants, examine actual preventive service implementation, and evaluate students' experiences and behavioral developments over time to establish stronger evidence regarding feasibility and potential effectiveness.

4. CONCLUTION

This study concludes that the indications of problematic online gaming among students at SMP Negeri 2 Belik need to be understood in relation to behavioral self-regulation, peer influence, and school discipline. The findings suggest that difficulties in managing gaming activities may coexist with challenges in maintaining educational responsibilities. Within this context, existing guidance and counseling practices, including classical guidance on time management, individual counseling, and collaboration with homeroom teachers and parents, represent relevant school-based responses to students' behavioral concerns. However, these findings do not establish a causal relationship between online gaming and school discipline problems. The main contribution of this study lies in providing a contextual understanding of preventive guidance and counseling practices and proposing a relational framework that integrates individual protective capacities with school and family support. The proposed framework emphasizes risk identification, self-awareness, digital literacy, self-regulation, coping skills, alternative activities, environmental support, and monitoring as interconnected components for future preventive counseling development. Nevertheless, these components represent conceptual recommendations rather than a comprehensive intervention program that has been implemented and evaluated at the research site. The findings are limited to the experiences of one student and one guidance and counseling teacher and do not include systematic measurements of behavioral changes following counseling. Therefore, the effectiveness of preventive guidance and counseling in reducing problematic online gaming risks cannot be determined from this study. Further research involving more diverse participants, systematic implementation of preventive counseling components, and longitudinal evaluation is needed to examine the feasibility and effectiveness of the proposed framework.

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