

# Moral Formation and the Clash of Online Games among Bajo Tribe Adolescents in Bungikela Village, Morowali Regency, Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

Bungikela Village in Morowali Regency is a coastal area inhabited by the Bajo tribe, who have a strong tradition in moral formation. However, widespread internet access has introduced a new phenomenon of online game addiction among adolescents, potentially clashing traditional values with digital culture. This study aims to describe the symptoms of online game addiction among Bajo adolescents and analyze its impact on their moral education. This qualitative study utilized a case study approach involving 14 informants, including community leaders, religious figures, teachers, parents, and adolescents.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, then analyzed using a descriptive qualitative method. Findings indicate clear symptoms of addiction, such as compulsive behavior, withdrawal symptoms, and increased playtime tolerance. This results in decreased social interaction, reduced enthusiasm for religious activities such as Quranic recitations, and a decline in academic performance. There is a conflict between digital dependency and the internalization of moral values.

This study recommends a holistic intervention involving the active roles of families and the community to preserve the cultural integrity and morality of adolescents in the digital age.

**Keywords:** Online game addiction, moral education, Bajo Tribe, coastal youth, self-control.

## INTRODUCTION

Bungikela Village is a coastal area situated in Morowali Regency, Central Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. The advancement of information technology and the expanding reach of internet services have significantly influenced the gaming lifestyles of coastal youth, particularly the Bajo tribe adolescents in Bungikela [1]–[7].

This village serves as the research site for understanding the phenomenon of online game addiction and its consequences on the moral education of Bajo youth [8].

The choice of this location is driven by several significant factors, including the village's rich cultural landscape, which facilitates interaction between the Bajo community and other ethnic groups like the Menui and Bugis [9]. While local culture remains a vital component of character building, information technology has altered adolescent behavior and perspectives [9]–[18], leading to online game addiction symptoms that endanger long-held moral values [19]–[31]. Furthermore, widespread internet availability has exacerbated addiction symptoms, especially among teenagers and young adults [32].

These symptoms manifest as compulsivity (the urge to play despite attempts to limit time), withdrawal (distress when not playing), tolerance (needing more playtime to achieve satisfaction), and interpersonal or health issues (detrimental effects on social ties and physical well-being) [33].

As addiction symptoms proliferate with internet access, effective management requires a holistic approach incorporating psychological intervention and a profound understanding of the underlying social and emotional dynamics [22]. With increasingly widespread internet access [2], [5], Bungikela Village is no longer isolated from global influences, rendering its adolescents more vulnerable to online game addiction. Among the 730 residents, there are 65 adolescents aged 11 to 18, a portion of whom struggle to control their gaming habits.

Research [20] revealing the correlation between self-control and online game addiction in Medan provides significant insights applicable to Bungikela, indicating that higher levels of addiction correspond to lower levels of self-control. Given the high levels of addiction and moderate self-control, the risks to adolescent morality increase in tandem with the time spent in digital environments.

In Bungikela, Bajo adolescents who are technology-literate face similar risks, with 15 individuals already indicated to have addiction issues. This situation underscores the importance of analyzing the influence of addiction on the moral values instilled by family, school, and society. Comprehending the factors influencing self-control within the local cultural and social context is vital for family and community interventions to effectively strengthen adolescent self-regulation.

Without adequate support, these adolescents risk becoming trapped in addiction, which threatens the morality and cultural integrity of the Bajo tribe. Consequently, this research is highly relevant, as exploring these relationships fosters a better understanding of the challenges faced and yields effective intervention strategies to support positive moral development while mitigating the negative impacts of online gaming.

These addiction symptoms are manifested through impulsive behaviors and withdrawal from both social and educational activities. Adolescents are increasingly inclined to neglect the cultural and religious values that should be instilled through formal and informal educational processes.

This shift potentially diminishes the quality of social interactions and undermines the established value structures within society. Furthermore, this research project aims to delve deeper into how local culture and religious values interact with gaming addiction, while proposing intervention strategies involving families, schools, and the community to reinforce adolescent morality [20], [21], [25]–[28], [31], [34], [35].

The social environment and a lack of familial support further exacerbate this condition. Despite the availability of alternative recreational activities, such as football and volleyball, many adolescents opt to immerse themselves in the virtual world of online gaming [33], [36].

Consequently, this study focuses on the importance of a holistic approach to creating educational and social interventions capable of addressing gaming addiction and shaping moral character consistent with the cultural identity and morality of the Bajo community in Bungikela Village. This study makes a significant contribution to the advancement of knowledge, particularly regarding the phenomenon of online game addiction.

Firstly, it offers a profound understanding of gaming addiction among adolescents within the specific context of the Bajo Tribe by delineating its causal factors and consequences. Such insights enrich the existing literature on digital addiction and adolescent behavioral patterns. Furthermore, this research elucidates the relationship between online gaming addiction and moral education, revealing how addiction can impede the process of internalizing cultural and religious values. These findings open further discourse on the necessity of integrating moral education into the modern technological era.

The focus on the Bajo Tribe in Bungikela Village provides a unique perspective on how local culture and traditions influence adolescent behavior in the digital era, adding a new dimension to the study of gaming addiction by incorporating socio-cultural factors.

The findings of this research also yield practical recommendations for educational and social interventions, emphasizing the pivotal roles of family, school, and community in addressing online gaming addiction.

These insights serve as a valuable reference for policymakers and educators in designing more effective programs. Furthermore, this study establishes a foundation for future research on the impact of technology on adolescent behavior and moral education across various cultural contexts, as well as for exploring enhanced mitigation strategies to confront the challenges posed by digital addiction.

Overall, this research contributes to the advancement of knowledge in the fields of education, psychology, and sociology, while providing practical insights for society to address emerging issues in the digital age.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design with a case study approach to gain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of online game addiction and its impact on the moral education of Bajo adolescents in Bungikela Village. The research was conducted in Bungikela Village, Morowali Regency, Central Sulawesi, chosen for its unique socio-cultural dynamics as a coastal community experiencing rapid digital transformation [37]–[43].

### Informants and Sampling

The primary informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, totaling 14 individuals. This group includes community leaders, religious figures, teachers, parents, and adolescents indicated to have online game addiction.

This diverse range of informants ensures a holistic perspective on the phenomenon from both the educators' and the subjects' viewpoints (Table 1).

Table 1. Profile of Research Informants

No	Informant Source (Pseudonym, Age in Years)	Role	Gender
1	Syarif (57)	Community Leader	Male
2	Mr. Harun (74)	Community Leader	Male
3	Mr. Aksal (32)	Religious Leader	Male
4	Mr. Arif (52)	Religious Leader	Male
5	Mrs. Sumnig (60)	Quranic Teacher	Female
6	Mrs. Mia (46)	Religious Education Teacher	Female
7	Mr. Ayu (54)	Parent	Male
8	Mr. Pipin (56)	Parent	Male
9	Mr. Mbaru' (46)	Parent	Male
10	Mr. Muji (30)	Parent	Male

11	Dilla (17)	Adolescent	Male
12	Rul (15)	Adolescent	Male
13	Asga (18)	Adolescent	Male
14	Ril (11)	Adolescent	Male

Source: Research Data, Processed in 2024.

The data in Table 1 comprises 14 informants from various societal roles whose identities have been pseudonymized. The informants include two community leaders, namely Syarif (57 years old) and Mr. Harun (74 years old), both of whom are male. From the religious leadership, there are two informants: Mr. Aksal (32 years old) and Mr. Arif (52 years old), also both male.

Furthermore, two educators involved in religious education participated: Mrs. Summning (60 years old) as a Quranic teacher and Mrs. Mia (46 years old) as a religious education teacher, both of whom are female. In the category of parents, there are four male informants: Mr. Ayu (54 years old), Mr. Pipin (56 years old), Mr. Mbaru' (46 years old), and Mr. Muji (30 years old), providing parental perspectives on the challenges faced by their children. Lastly, the data includes four male adolescents of various ages: Dilla (17 years old), Rul (15 years old), Asga (18 years old), and Ril (11 years old).

With this composition, the data reflects insights from diverse societal elements regarding the issues faced by adolescents, as well as their respective roles in supporting moral development within their environment.

### Data Collection Techniques

The researchers collected data through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis to understand the interaction between adolescent moral formation and the influence of online gaming [44], [45]. Through these methods, this study aims to explore both the positive and negative impacts of online games on the behavior and moral values of adolescents, as well as how the local community adapts to this phenomenon.

The results of this study are expected to provide profound insights into the challenges and solutions for preserving adolescent morality in the digital age.

### Data Analysis

The data analysis technique employed is **descriptive qualitative analysis**. The analytical process commenced with the transcription of interviews and field notes, which were subsequently categorized into key themes related to moral formation and the influence of online gaming.

The researchers utilized a **content analysis approach** to extract patterns and meanings from the acquired data [41], [46]–[52]. Furthermore, the data were analyzed by correlating participant responses with the specific socio-cultural context of the Bajo Tribe.

### Data's Validity dan Realibility

Data validity was enhanced through triangulation, specifically by comparing information from various sources, including interviews with adolescents, parents, and community leaders.

The results of this analysis aim to provide a more profound understanding of the impact of online gaming on adolescent morality and how cultural norms influence their interaction with technology [33], [36], [45].

## RESULTS

### Moral Formation of Bajo Adolescents in Bungikela Village

Adolescents of the Bajo Tribe are traditionally known for their strong moral character (*akhlak*), reflected in their early commitment to preserving ancestral traditions and cultural values. They are raised in an environment that emphasizes the importance of solidarity, mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), and mutual respect.

Practices such as performing customary rituals, indigenous language instruction, and active involvement in community activities strengthen both their identity and moral foundation [9], [13], [15], [17], [53]. As a renowned maritime community, the Bajo people possess customs deeply intertwined with their life cycles and the surrounding marine environment. Values such as reverence for nature, ecosystem conservation, and maintaining harmonious relationships with community members are integral parts of their moral education. Over time, the integration of modern values has also gained attention, leading adolescents to strive for a balance between upholding tradition and adapting to contemporary changes [11], [12].

The games played by Bajo youth in Indonesia are generally closely linked to water and marine elements, reflecting their identity as skilled and experienced sailors. Their main activities include swimming, free diving, and traditional fish archery, techniques that have been passed down through generations [54]–[58]. Additionally, they often engage in high jumps into the sea as a form of challenge and play.

One highly favored traditional game is the sarung swing, where children play in front of stilt houses that float above the water [57]. This swing not only provides entertainment but also serves as a rich cultural symbol and a reflection of their daily life. Moreover, the game of Pongka', which is also part of their tradition, further adds diversity to the play activities among Bajo youth. The sarung swing played in front of stilt houses, commonly done by Bajo children in Wakatobi after school, serves as a means to maintain social bonds and preserve ancestral traditions.

Through this play, they not only enjoy themselves but also strengthen their cultural identity and the values of their long-standing community [57]. Thus, these traditional games are not merely physical activities; they are an integral part of character building and the preservation of the rich culture of the Bajo people.

### Symptoms of Online Game Addiction among Bajo Adolescents in Bungikela Village

Based on interviews with community and religious leaders in Bungikela Village, the symptoms and degrees of online game addiction—as conceptualized by Chen & Chang (2016) [33], [35], [36], have become evident in the daily behavior of Bajo adolescents [33], [35], [36]. These phenomena are detailed as follows:

#### Compulsivity

Adolescents demonstrate a compulsive urge to continue playing online games despite efforts from families and the community to reduce their screen time. There is a declining trend in adolescents' self-initiated enthusiasm for Quranic recitations<sup>1</sup>. This is further evidenced by reports that adolescents prioritize gaming over attending congregational prayers at the mosque. Dilla, a 17-year-old adolescent, exhibits a significant degree of addiction, reflecting a deep dependency on gaming<sup>2</sup>.

He frequently plays until late at night, showing high compulsivity, particularly when the internet connection is stable. Dilla defines his addiction as a loss of control over time and intensity; he admitted to struggling to gain internet access even when his data package was exhausted, indicating distress when unable to play. The impact on his daily life is clear: he has become more withdrawn, interacts less with peers, and rarely attends religious activities, which negatively affects his moral education (*akhlak*).

Despite understanding moral values, his dependency causes him to neglect his obligations as a community member and a morally upright youth [ii]. Similar symptoms are also observed in younger adolescents, such as Rul<sup>3</sup>.

## Withdrawal Symptoms

Adolescents experience discomfort or anxiety when unable to play. Statements from Mr. Syarif and Mr. Aksal confirm that the intense focus on gaming leads to a sense of loss when they cannot access their games <sup>4</sup>.

## Tolerance

Adolescents require longer playing durations to achieve the same level of satisfaction. This phenomenon indicates that as more time is spent gaming, the need for extended play increases, subsequently encroaching upon their social activities<sup>5</sup>.

## Interpersonal and Health Issues

Online game addiction has a detrimental impact on social relationships, as evidenced by the declining attendance of adolescents for congregational prayers at the mosque. This reflects a disruption in communal bonds and a decrease in positive social interaction<sup>6</sup>.

## Other Negative Impacts

Interviews also revealed that addiction is associated with declining academic performance, sleep disturbances, lack of physical activity, and potential mental health issues. Both families and the community recognize that these impacts are significant and require urgent attention<sup>7</sup>.

Data validity testing from interviews with various sources was subsequently conducted, followed by a week-long observation, which is presented in Table 2. The observations conducted in Bungikela Village reveal a growing addiction to online gaming among adolescents. On April 18, 2024, at a youth hangout spot, three male adolescents were seen playing online games, with two of them engaging in *Free Fire* and one in *Mobile Legends*. A similar scenario was observed the following day, when four male adolescents were again playing *Free Fire* in a residential front yard. By April 20, four male adolescents were playing *Mobile Legends* at the same location. Throughout the observations, it was evident that the youth consistently spent their evenings gaming, often playing late into the night.

This was particularly highlighted on April 22 and 23, when three and two adolescents, respectively, played *Mobile Legends* in front of homes until midnight. Additionally, on April 24, four adolescents were observed playing *Mobile Legends* in the bridge area. This pattern indicates a high level of engagement and dependency on online games among the youth, raising concerns about the impact on their daily lives and social interactions.

Table 2. Observation Sheet of Adolescent Online Gaming Behavior in Bungikela Village

Date (Day/Month/Year)	Location	Observation Description	End of Observation
Thu, April 18, 2024	Youth hangout spot	Observed 3 male adolescents playing online games; 2 playing <i>Free Fire</i> and 1 playing <i>Mobile Legends</i> .	22:30 UTC+8
Fri, April 19, 2024	Residential front yard	Observed 4 male adolescents playing <i>Free Fire</i> .	22:53 UTC+8
Sat, April 20, 2024	Residential front yard	Observed 4 male adolescents playing <i>Mobile Legends</i> .	00:14 UTC+8

Sun, April 21, 2024	Youth hangout spot	Observed 2 male adolescents playing <i>Mobile Legends</i> .	19:47 UTC+8
Mon, April 22, 2024	Residential front yard	Observed 3 adolescents playing <i>Mobile Legends</i> .	21:30 UTC+8
Tue, April 23, 2024	Residential front yard	Observed 2 adolescents playing <i>Mobile Legends</i> .	00:22 UTC+8
Wed, April 24, 2024	Bridge area	Observed 4 adolescents playing <i>Mobile Legends</i> .	23:27 UTC+8

**Source:** Primary research data, processed in 2024.

## DISCUSSION

One of the most compelling findings of this study is the significant impact of online game addiction on the moral education (*akhlak*) of Bajo adolescents in Bungikela Village. Adolescents exposed to excessive online gaming exhibit a decline in academic performance, diminished social interaction, and negative behavioral shifts.

This addiction not only disrupts their study time but also diverts their attention from the cultural and religious values essential for their moral internalization. While the local community is aware of this phenomenon and has made efforts to address it, there is an urgent need for more intensive educational programs to inform youth about the risks of digital dependency. Furthermore, factors such as insufficient parental supervision and peer pressure contribute to the rising addiction levels, underscoring the necessity of an active role for families and the social environment in fostering positive adolescent behavior.

The findings regarding the impact of online game addiction on the moral education of Bajo youth can be elucidated through several relevant theoretical frameworks. First, addiction theory, specifically referring to Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD) and Computer Game Addiction, explains that an individual's preoccupation with online gaming can lead to significant disruptions in daily life, including academic achievement and social engagement [19], [22], [23].

In this context, addicted adolescents tend to neglect their academic and social responsibilities, resulting in lower learning outcomes and deteriorating social relationships [26], [35]. Furthermore, the theory of Moral Education (*Akhlak*) emphasizes the importance of internalizing moral values to achieve well-being in both worldly and spiritual life [59]–[62].

Online game addiction, which distracts adolescents from constructive activities, potentially leads to the erosion of these values, preventing them from internalizing behaviors consistent with their cultural and religious norms.

Social factors, such as peer influence and the lack of parental oversight, also emerge as critical aspects. Research indicates that adolescents are highly susceptible to their social environment, where peer invitations to play games can reinforce addictive patterns [20], [21], [25], [35]. The lack of parental guidance exacerbates this situation, as adolescents are deprived of the support necessary to redirect them toward more productive and beneficial activities [24].

In conclusion, these findings demonstrate that online game addiction impacts not only educational attainment but also the fundamental moral formation of adolescents. Therefore, holistic interventions involving families,

schools, and the wider community are essential to address this issue and support the development of better character among the youth.

The pragmatic attitude prevalent among much of Indonesian society today has led to a gradual erosion of the noble values of the nation's culture. This decline is further exacerbated by the rise of violence and social anarchy, which contribute to the deteriorating socio-cultural fabric of Indonesia.

Traditional values that emphasize courtesy, friendliness, mutual respect, wisdom, and religiosity seem to be increasingly overshadowed by an instant and modern lifestyle. Society appears more prone to emotional outbursts, manifesting in anger, brutality, and harshness, often lacking self-control.

This phenomenon can be seen as a representation of the weakening character of a nation once renowned for its hospitality, politeness, tolerance, and noble virtues<sup>8</sup>.

In contrast, the traditional games of the Bajo youth reflect their strong connection to water and maritime life, showcasing their identity as resilient sailors. These activities encompass swimming, free diving, traditional fish archery, and high jumps into the sea. Additionally, traditional games such as the sarung swing, played in front of stilt houses, have gained popularity.

These activities not only provide recreation but also serve as a means of preserving the community's cultural heritage, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a harmonious balance between modern influences and traditional values [54]–[58].

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that although Bajo adolescents in Bungikela Village are traditionally raised with robust moral values, such as solidarity and reverence for nature, the expansion of internet access has triggered significant online game addiction symptoms among them.

This addiction manifests as compulsive behavior, where adolescents feel an uncontrollable urge to play, experience anxiety or distress when unable to access games, and demonstrate an increasing tolerance in gaming duration to achieve the same level of satisfaction. Some adolescents have effectively lost self-control over their gaming intensity and duration, leading them to become more reclusive and withdrawn from physical social activities within their community.

Furthermore, online game addiction detrimentally impacts moral education by diverting adolescents' attention from the internalization of cultural and religious values. This shift is evident in the declining enthusiasm for Quranic recitations and the reduced frequency of attendance at congregational prayers in the mosque.

In addition to causing a decline in academic performance and physical health issues, such as sleep deprivation, this phenomenon is exacerbated by a lack of parental supervision and strong peer pressure. Consequently, a holistic approach involving the active roles of families, schools, and community leaders is imperative. Such an approach must facilitate educational and social interventions to fortify the morality and cultural identity of the Bajo tribe against the negative impacts of the digital era.

## RECOMMENDATION

It is imperative for stakeholders to take immediate and concrete steps to address the symptoms of online gaming addiction among Bajo adolescents in Bungikela Village, as follows: Parents must increase supervision and guidance regarding their children's device usage and establish more intensive communication to strengthen adolescents' self-control.

Creative and intensive educational programs are needed within mosques or Quranic study centers (*TPQ*) to revitalize youth interest, ensuring that religious values remain internalized amidst the digital era.

The community and village government should revitalize positive extracurricular activities, such as sports (football and volleyball) and maritime cultural activities, while preserving water and sea-based games for adolescents.

Emphasizing traditional practices that have thrived since ancient times, such as swimming, free diving, traditional fish archery, and high jumps into the sea, will provide healthy alternatives to the temptations of the virtual world.

Additionally, traditional games like the sarung swing played in front of stilt houses should be promoted, as they enhance community engagement and cultural heritage.

Schools and educators in Bungikela Village are expected to integrate digital literacy and moral education into the curriculum to equip adolescents with the necessary tools to navigate the challenges of modern technology.

It is recommended that more in-depth studies be conducted on specific mitigation strategies within other coastal cultural contexts to enrich social intervention models in Indonesia's frontier, outermost, and disadvantaged regions.

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Mrs. Suming (pseudonym), April 21, 2024. As a Quranic teacher, she provides a scheduled recitation program for adolescents between 15:15 and 17:30, with special Sunday sessions at 09:00.

<sup>2</sup> Interviews with Dilla (17, pseudonym) and Aga (19, pseudonym), April 19, 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Interviews with Rul (14, pseudonym) and Ril (11, pseudonym), April 19, 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Interviews with Mr. Syarif and Mr. Aksal (pseudonyms), April 18, 2024.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Mr. Harun (pseudonym), April 21, 2024.

<sup>6</sup> Interviews with Mr. Mbaru and Mr. Ayu (pseudonyms), April 20, 2024.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Mr. Pipin (pseudonym), April 21, 2024.

<sup>8</sup> On November 2018, Dadang Sunendar, Head of the Language Development and Guidance Agency in Jakarta, delivered a speech upon the release of Mustika Desi Harjani's book titled *Learning from the Sea Children of the Bajo Tribe*.