

## Section 1. Cultural studies

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### **NO GAME, NO GAIN: VIDEO GAMES ARE PORTALS TO EXPLORATION, CONNECTION, LEARNING, AND FREEDOM**

**Abstract.** Indeed, gaming addiction is an issue among adults as well as youths that has concerned many. But is gaming entirely deserving of all negative associations and are there no better ways? Chinese authorities should reconsider their new online gaming ban.

**Keywords:** China, video games, gaming, community, social, platforms, regulation.

You eagerly enter your room, plop down your backpack, and turn on your device. It has been a long day of classes, but right now is the time to take a mental break from the stress of school. Maybe you'll catch a few friends online today, or even make some more? The day's fatigue lifts a little and a spark of excitement flares in your chest as you open your favorite online video game. Undoubtedly, this is how I felt as a gamer and former student in China. However, this positive energy gamers perceive is not shared by some others: to many parents and Chinese authorities, online gaming is detrimental to children's health and academic performance. Suddenly, regulators are limiting playing time for minors to a mere three hours on weekends and holidays, starting in August 2021. Indeed, gaming addiction is an issue among adults as well as youths that has concerned many. But is gaming entirely deserving of all negative associations and are there no better ways? Chinese authorities should reconsider their new online gaming ban.

Some may think of an antisocial introvert when imagining a gamer, but that may not be entirely accurate. Online gaming counters "disrupted social networks" and "long work hours" by "[offering] a so-

cial outlet and an easily accessible hobby" [1]. I am familiar with the competitive environment and demanding course loads of Chinese schools, and quick relaxation and social interaction are, in fact, much needed elements in a student's day. Video games provide substantial online communities of people sharing similar interests, available to anyone with an electronic device. They act as platforms for players to interact and collaborate, connecting people across the world and allowing them to form lasting friendships and bonds that they otherwise never would have made. In this way, games can actually encourage prosocial behavior among youths.

Some parents may also argue that gaming makes children empty-headed and harms their academic capabilities. Despite the common belief that video games are unproductive and pointless, however, research studies have suggested that they help develop children's cognitive abilities and learning. According to Dr. Marc Palaus, Ph.D. who led one such study, games "require mentally holding and manipulating information to get a result" [2]. "Video games are a perfect recipe for strengthening our cognitive skills, almost without our noticing," he says [2]. They improve one's memory as well as

things like mental focus and problem-solving skills. Even action games, which are generally deemed as too aggressive, correlate with heightened visual processing abilities, mental flexibility, and reaction time [3]. Perhaps online games aren't so terrible for minors.

Additionally, families hope a public policy would better enforce children's obedience. One Chinese parent says, "Some teenage kids just won't listen to their parents' discipline, and this policy can control them... it amounts to the state taking care of our kids for us" [4]. However, with so many factors complicating this issue, shouldn't parents want to engage in this issue themselves rather than rely on the government? See this as proof that it may be better for par-

ents to handle it *with* their children. Families should take this as an opportunity to establish more trusting and understanding relationships. Instead of using a more authoritarian style, families could discuss together and reach a consensus on an appropriate balance. Thus, it would be more beneficial for families to address game addiction themselves by tailoring their approach to achieve mutual respect.

Video games are portals to exploration, connection, learning, and freedom. In making policies to address gaming addiction, Chinese authorities should also consider the many benefits of video games as to not so crudely oversimplify the issue and to allow flexibility, or step back and encourage parent participation.

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