

ПЕДАГОГІКА І ПСИХОЛОГІЯ

BEYOND GAMING: ONLINE COMMUNICATION ON STREAMING
PLATFORMS AS A TOOL TO PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH IN SLOVAKIA AND
THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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In today's digital age, online communication is a bigger part of our lives than ever before. In recent years, we have witnessed the growing popularity of gaming streaming platforms such as Twitch, YouTube Gaming, and Facebook Gaming, where players come together to share their experiences playing video games. However, these platforms have also become a space where people can share other topics, including their personal problems and difficulties. This article focuses on exploring the use of online communication in the environment of gaming streaming platforms as a tool for supporting mental health and overcoming difficult life situations.

There is increasing evidence that online communication can be an effective tool for supporting mental health. Some experts in the field of psychology and psychotherapy use online communication to provide therapeutic services, such as online therapy and consultations. This fact was highlighted in a study by Jeanine Turner, PhD, a professor of communication, culture, and technology at Georgetown University. Her study showed that patients and healthcare providers who use telehealth generally perceive it positively. The benefits of telehealth relate to various areas, including improving access to healthcare, increasing patient and provider comfort, and improving the quality of care. The ultimate result is an increase in patient and physician satisfaction with the use of telehealth as part of healthcare [1].

"For patients who have never sought care from a therapist before due to various barriers - including concerns about being seen at a physical clinic - the opportunity to access mental health services online can be beneficial," says Dhara Meghani, PhD, a clinical psychology assistant professor at the University of San Francisco [2].

However, a study on the use of online communication on gaming streaming platforms as a means of supporting mental health and overcoming difficult life situations in Slovakia and the Czech Republic has not yet been investigated.

The aim of this article is to evaluate existing knowledge about the use of online communication in the environment of gaming streaming platforms and analyze how this form of communication can be used to overcome stressful situations, isolation, and other difficulties that many people face.

Implementation of the Survey

Thanks to technological advancements, internet availability has become more convenient and people are using online games not only for entertainment but also to overcome stress and other difficulties. From this perspective, we conducted a survey in the mentioned online environment - through quantitative research - an online questionnaire that was distributed among users of gaming streaming platforms using the chat of Slovak and Czech streamers. For greater interaction, we distributed the

questionnaire to communities created on other platforms that support streaming on gaming platforms (Discord, Instagram, etc.). Target participants of the survey received information from the streamer or another competent person managing the platform supporting streaming on gaming platforms. Subsequently, the questionnaire was distributed to participants in a private message or chat message. The message contained a hypertext link to the survey questionnaire. The survey was attended by 80 respondents from Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

Survey Results

We focused our questions on real-time chat communication and also on private messages used between users.

In the first question, we asked how often users engage in communication with other users in real-time chat.

Figure 1: Engaging in real-time chat conversations

Our data analysis (Figure 1) showed that up to 86% of respondents answered "yes" to this question, indicating a high level of interaction among users in the online community. Interestingly, 14% of respondents answered "no" to this question.

This result may be influenced by various factors, such as a lack of interest in real-time chatting, preference for other communication methods, or limited access to the internet or chat-enabled devices.

Another question we were interested in was whether the respondents also use communication through private messages.

Figure 2: Engaging in conversations through private messages

Our data (Figure 2) shows that 51% of respondents answered "yes" to this question, while 49% answered "no".

It seems that the form of communication in the private message section is not equally attractive to all users. It is possible that some users prefer communication in real-time chat instead. Despite this fact, there are still many users who prefer a more personal form of communication. Factors that could influence whether users decide to use private messages include the length of time users spend online, or personal preferences regarding the method of communication. We did not investigate in detail the reasons why respondents do not engage in communication through private messages.

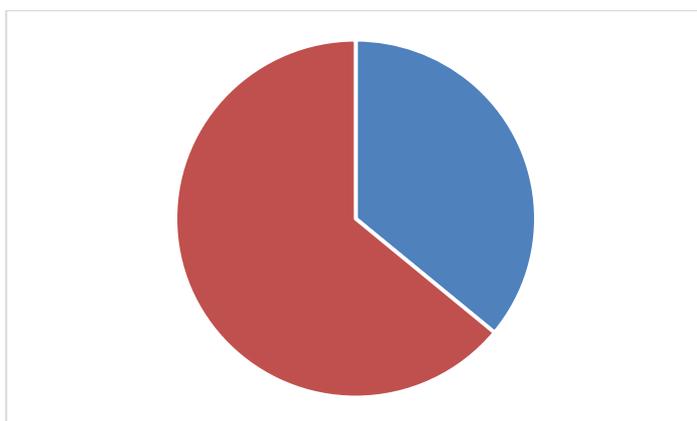


Figure 3: Help in a difficult life situation

Based on the survey results (Figure 3), we found that only 36% of respondents answered "yes" to the question of whether online communication on gaming streaming platforms helped them avoid difficult situations in life, while 64% of respondents answered "no". This result suggests that communication with other users on gaming streaming platforms may not be a source of support for everyone in challenging situations.

Upon a deeper analysis of the results, we found that among those who answered "yes", the majority were younger users who have experienced difficulties in coping with stress, anxiety, or depression, as well as psychological problems arising from a breakup, divorce of parents, or a death in the family. These users reported that communicating with other users on gaming streaming platforms helped them feel less alone and that there is a place where they can share their problems, worries, and concerns.

On the other hand, those who answered "no" were mostly older users who prefer communication in the real world or on other platforms. These users emphasize that communication on gaming streaming platforms may not always be of high quality and that in some cases, it may contribute to a deterioration of their mental state.

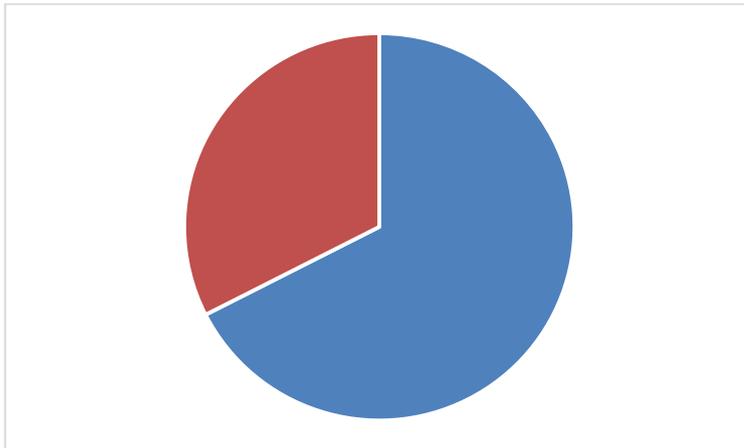


Figure 4: Creating a lasting social relationship

The survey results (Figure 4) show that the majority of users of gaming platforms have formed lasting social relationships with other users. Specifically, 67.5% of respondents answered that they have managed to establish lasting social relationships with users of the mentioned platforms, while 32.5% of respondents answered that they have not.

We can say that gaming streaming platforms show potential to be a very effective means of creating lasting social relationships. For many users, these relationships are an important aspect of their lives, and gaming platforms are a place where they can meet and play with people from all over the world.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the above-mentioned survey, we see that gaming streaming platforms and communication with other users in real-time and in private messaging can be an important way of interaction and communication for many users. Around 86% of users engage in real-time communication, and 51% also participate in private messaging. Furthermore, 67.5% of respondents have met people in gaming platforms with whom they have formed a lasting social relationship.

These results show that these platforms can be used to overcome stressful situations, isolation, and other difficulties that many people face. Creating social relationships and interacting with others can be important factors in maintaining mental health. This form of communication can be beneficial for those who have problems with communication in their daily lives, as well as for those who have difficulty making friends or meeting new people.

Given the growing popularity of gaming streaming platforms and real-time interaction, this form of communication can provide new opportunities to improve the mental health and social life of many people. However, it is important to realize that interaction with other users on gaming platforms should not be the only way to maintain social contacts. Many other ways of communication and interaction are equally important and should not be overlooked.

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