

The role of community identity in changing online gamers' behavior

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Keywords:</i> identity community behavior community online games gamers behavior identity roles</p>	<p>The purpose of this research is to determine the role of community identity on the behavior of online gamers. This research was conducted on the online gaming community X, which consists of students. The method used is qualitative phenomenology with interview data collection techniques. The research results show that the identity behavior of online gamers is determined by their community identity role. This community forms its own norms and values that are mutually agreed upon. The community also motivates the formation of gaming behavior and the intentions of each member's behavior. The rational individual of action (gamer) is formed by a group of actions based on a community of utility, not an individual utility. Community members must force themselves to gain recognition of their group identity through many irrational acts of conformity.</p>

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Introduction

The community can be identified as a group of individuals who have the same attachment, whether bound by time, place, and certain situations. Of course, members of this community carry out habits (behavior) based on awareness, even though this can be done online (Prayugo, 2018). Habitual behavior is within the scope of reality and digital dimensions in which there are bonds and culture as well as rules of the game (Nurhaliza & Fauziah, 2020) that members (individuals) who are members of the community will form joint involvement in (certain) behavior. If members violate the rules of the game agreed upon in the community, there are sanctions. Determination of sanctions is necessary because each member of the community has an understanding that they are obliged to obey the community rules that have been determined (agreed) together (Ostrom, 1990). The motives for actions involving the management of a particular group (community) will be based on that group. If not, then managing the group's resources will cause many problems. This means that whatever situation in a community group will encourage good cooperation if the individuals in the group realize that they can achieve big and long-term benefits if they are in line with the group's rules of play and can control any situation that occurs in the group. One resource ownership that community group members must comply with is the rules of the game and access to resources (Ostrom, 1990).

Meanwhile, the situation in the community will form a normative, emotional, and social-cognitive environment and ultimately form a community culture (Witherspoon et al., 2023). The situation in a community is also determined by a group of people who exchange information and ideas through digital media and aim to form a mutually

beneficial situation for its members, sharing information, opinions, and experiences (Banerjee et al., 2023). Community members will be increasingly appreciated if they contribute to the community. Rewards for members' activity in their community will influence their commitment to their community (Lee, 2009). These rewards are not only financial but can also be in non-financial form. This appreciation will be one of the motives for members to survive in the community (Jang et al., 2007), therefore it can be believed that the motivation for member behavior is appreciation from the community, that the community plays a role in the behavior of its members. The complexity of the problems of individual members will be very interesting to study because the community consists of many individual identities which are of course very diverse.

Limited recognition of individual identities in the community will be a time machine that will have impacts, both positive and negative. However, it is also possible that many factors will arise that cause the individual's identity to be strong or weak. Identifying the impact of community rewards on individual members over a long period will influence group participation and psychologically will give rise to member participation in the group (Falatheh, 2017). The identity of community behavior will have a direct impact on the identity of individual members, this is identical in that social identity will color the identity of individuals who are members of the social community (Taylor et al., 2009). This behavioral identity will form a certain pattern. The contribution of community identity shapes the lifestyle of its members (Hafizh et al., 2022). This shows that community respect for individuals will have a role in shaping individual behavior in the group, one of which is shaping lifestyle behavior.

Many online game players also have communities. Many online gamer communities are grouped based on types of games, game platforms, community goals, and others. This shows that online games create new spaces for players to interact with each other and build relationships between members and also with other groups. The use of technology and mastery of technology skills will give rise to abilities that might be used as work that generates (money) (Faiza & Kristina, 2021) these abilities form competitiveness. Likewise, online game players need technology mastery skills when playing and also use these skills as a promising job (money). However, in a rapidly changing technological environment, these players are also required to always adapt (Malik & Kristina, 2020; Amalia & Kristina, 2021). Although this adaptation can be done through practice. Training aims to improve competence (Kristina, 2010), at least online gamers always try to improve their playing skills every time. They carry out these improvements in their abilities in the community, so it is indicated that whatever their activities are, they are dominated by the work behavior of their community.

This research will identify what role community identity plays in online gamers' behavior. This identity is identified from the patterns of interaction and communication between community members which can shape the behavior of its members. This identification is carried out in the online gamers' community because online game players often interact to achieve their group's goals. Identification of this behavior focuses on consumer behavior that leads to luxury; this is done because there is excessive love for one's community (Kristina, 2021). The members of this online gamers' community are students who don't have jobs, so it is interesting to research from a consumer behavior perspective. Consumptive behavior

is identical to the consumption expenditure decisions they make regarding online games. Community identity is believed to influence consumption patterns.

Method

This research uses a qualitative research approach because qualitative research requires depth of information to explore answers to research problems (Kristina, 2020), thus the research objective is to explore the behavior of members of the online gamers' community. Meanwhile, the method used is the phenomenological method. This method is used to reveal the informants' experiences regarding the research problem (Kristina, 2023).

The study was conducted in the online game community X (Twitter) in Bangkalan, which comprises mainly of male students aged 18 to 22 from Trunojoyo University, Madura. Their gatherings for online gaming usually take place in cafes and coffee shops around the campus, with virtual communication being the norm. The discussions revolve around online game competitions, including event schedules and prizes. The informants for the research were chosen purposefully, and data was collected through in-depth interviews, which were then processed and analyzed phenomenologically. Interviews using the phenomenological method are carried out in an unstructured manner and aim to explore the experiences of the informants (Kristina, 2024).

Results and Discussion

Data processing in this research was simultaneously integrated with the analysis process and conducted during interviews. In-depth interviews were carried out with the informants listed in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Research Informants

No	Name	Roles	Details
1	Mr. Pd (21 years old)	Community Chairman	Main informant
2	Mr HZ (20 years old)	Community administrator	Main informant
3	Mr. Sg (21 years old)	Community administrator	Main informant
4	Mr. Fh (20 years old)	Regular member	Main informant
5	Mr. Bm (19 years old)	Regular member	Main informant
6	Mr. Ag (22 years old)	Non-regular member	Supporting informant

Source: Processed data, 2024

The informants in Table 1 were chosen based on their close connection to the community’s identity and behavior. The online game X community was established in 2018 and primarily consists of both permanent and non-permanent members, with a majority being students at Trunojoyo University, Madura. The final semester students and males are the dominant groups within the community. The informants were selected because they consider online gaming a necessity in their lives, having played for more than 5 years and spending over 3 hours a day playing. Their lives revolve around online gaming. Non-permanent members, on the other hand, rarely play but are still registered as members. While their rights and obligations are the same, they differ in terms of their level of involvement and respect within the community.

The results of this research will be grouped into themes of findings based on the results of in-depth interviews, namely:

Community identity

The identity of the X community, composed of student online gamers, is largely influenced by the self-concept of its members, and holds significant emotional value attached to its membership.

This community demonstrates that the scope of online gameplay is based on the guidelines set by the community. In terms of personality, community members contribute to the identity of their community, as the community establishes rules that only one type of game is played, even though members may play different types of online games. The following findings compare the types of games that have become the community’s identity with the types of games played by its members:

Table 2. Types of Games as Group Identity

Types of Games as Community Identity	
Types of Games Liked by Individuals	Types of Games Agreed by the Community
Games Moba, RPG, strategy, sports and games horror	only play games Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) ie Mobile Legends Mobile Legends

Source: Primary data, processed (2024)

If consider the game from a community perspective, the game that becomes an identity for the community is the game Mobile Legends: Bang Bang. It falls into the multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) genre and is popular worldwide, especially in the Asian region (Wikipedia, 2024). This indicates that the community prefers games with global appeal, played by many gamers and communities around the world. In this game, a strong team is required to win, with 5 players controlling their own avatars (heroes) using individual devices. Victory is achieved through teamwork, that is important for all community members to unite in order to win.

Additionally, community identity is shaped by the interactions among its members. These interactions encompass

norms, values, and habits. Over time, the community's values become ingrained in the individual identities of its members. Research indicates that individuals in communication relationships internalize the same knowledge and behaviors. This occurs because the community's strong values compel individuals to work together to achieve success. The community's values and norms are shared through gatherings and discussions about game strategies, indicating that the internalized value identity forms a robust social network. Mobile Legends Bang Bang has been found to positively contribute to social identity by leveraging existing social networks and virtual communities while also creating new forms of cultural activity (Rahma & Fajar, 2022). Despite predominantly occurring online, communication patterns within the community are circular, encompassing cooperation, competition, conflict, and accommodation (Arifah & Candrasari, 2022). Conflicts arise when community members interact, especially in relation to accessing games. Differences in availability and agreed-upon playing times can lead to conflicts. For example, one community has agreed to play online games from 10:00 PM to 4:00 AM (WIB), which requires a significant amount of time and expensive data packages. This leads to the constant search for places with good internet access, such as cafes with free wifi in the campus area. These conflicts stem from varying cultural habits related to sleeping and playing, creating tension within the gaming culture (Merinda et al., 2024).

In community interactions, there are also limitations. The findings show that the interactions between members while playing will be limited to the chat feature, comments feature, global chat feature, and voice chat. This interaction can often lead to cyberbullying. Community members may have experienced cyberbullying, including

receiving messages with inappropriate or negative content. Participants admitted that they tended to react with strong emotions when playing online games, which led to the use of impolite language. This demonstrates the potential negative impact of using online game language on students' politeness. However, this community also has a strong positive identity. This means that they recognize the benefits of this game lie in the self-control of its members. It also involves the development of game application security concepts and community-based crime prevention to empower online game communities to combat cyberbullying in Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) based online games (Ramdhani & Ufran, 2024). This community is committed to combating cyberbullying.

According to interviews with informants, it was found that interactions among community members contribute to forming the community's identity. Players strive to maintain their membership in the community until they graduate and return home. Being part of a gaming community is a source of pride and is seen as a measure of one's greatness upon being accepted into a community. The choice of having fun with friends and working towards a common goal is a key reason for joining the community. Other informants also mentioned that they might stop playing games if they were no longer in college and could potentially leave the community if they wanted to play other games. Community members take pride in being part of a community that frequently wins in games.

The research revealed that the process of forming a community identity is influenced by the games that are habitually chosen to be played. This is also linked to the decision to join a proud community, leading them to view the community as an integral part of their lives until they graduate and

return home. Members' social status is determined by their social identity within the community. They seek recognition and acceptance in society, as they aim to become gaming experts and achieve success through their community involvement. As a result, they exhibit characteristics of a collaborative or cooperative sub-culture and a competitive status hierarchy (O'Leary & Carroll, 2013).

Changes in individual behavior of community members

The research findings indicate that the majority of the gamer community members are students who rely on financial support from their parents. The behavior observed among these individuals can be categorized into psychological and consumption behaviors.

The psychological behavioral findings reveal that members tend to become more aggressive, impulsive, and neglect their social and personal responsibilities. The interviews conducted with the community members indicated that their academic performance was impacted, with disrupted lectures, decreased interest in learning, falling asleep in class, and late submission of coursework being commonly reported. Additionally, the study highlighted that online game addiction is prevalent among adolescents, often stemming from feelings of loneliness and the need for affiliation (Lebho et al., 2020). While members find entertainment and a sense of skill development through interactive communication and strategic gameplay in online games, they often overlook the negative impact of their gaming behavior, ultimately leading to addiction (Khosiin, 2022).

Changes in behavior due to community identity will have negative impacts. This is proven by the findings showing that they have low self-control efforts and tend to be

aggressive because they utter bad sentences or verbal words. This self-control ability is part of their efforts to intervene in conditions and situations when playing games. Meanwhile, on the other hand, an effective way to create a fun playing atmosphere is to engage in verbal activity, and possibly lose control. In fact, the playing atmosphere must at least contain positive values so that it will also form positive behavior (Putra & Hartono, 2024). If members' interactions are only in the community area, it is possible that they will be disturbed when interacting socially. The use of online games can have a negative impact on participants' social interactions (Juniarti, 2024). This means that the more often an individual plays online games, the lower their social skills (Satura & Rifayani, 2024).

Another behavioral change shown is consumer behavior. This can be seen when community members have to buy a certain amount of money to fulfill their game consumption. The findings of this research also show that informants tend to spend a disproportionate amount of money on in-game items or additional content. The phenomenon of loot boxes or treasure boxes in video games has triggered consumption behavior. *Loot boxes* are *in-game items* that contain random prizes, often rare or exclusive items. Meanwhile, what they often consume is buying data packages from 2 GB to 32 GB and can use up to 2GB data packages to play the online game Mobile Legends.

Another finding is that the influence of friends and other community members often leads to increased consumption in gaming. The community frequently shares game recommendations, tips, and tricks, influencing the choice of games to play together. Group discussions can spark new ideas and strategies. Gamers' budget for gaming varies, with some spending around IDR 35,000 for a Telkomsel data package

or IDR 50,000 for an Indosat data package per month. Additionally, gamers set aside around IDR 3,000 to buy hero *skins*. Overall, the total amount spent on online games ranges from IDR IDR 100,000 to 150,000.

A series of online gaming needs that must be met by members must, of course, include satisfaction values. All gamers are assumed to always maximize satisfaction with the obstacles they face. The problem that consumers face is that they are confronted with various choices in allocating their budget to purchase several goods. With limited resources, community members must fulfill their responsibilities after a thoughtful process. This will give rise to problems, including irrational behavior (Mitchell, 2022). Irrational behavior arises because they are forced to. Research findings show that it is the community's identity that compels them to behave in this way to the community's wishes. The quality of their lives is largely determined by the identity formation of the community they belong to. If they do not follow the community rules, they experience discrimination in games and irregular play. However, on the other hand, if they continue to behave like a community, then it is possible that they will take part in online gambling. Meanwhile, other research finds that playing online games will encourage online gambling, violent games, and aggressive behavior in teenagers (Looi et al., 2023).

The research findings indicate that community identity has a significant impact on influencing the behavior of its members. It is challenging to alter this behavioral change once it occurs, as online communities and games hold great significance in their lives. This is due to the strong connections within the community, and the community identity serves as a behavioral marker for them.

Conclusion

Based on this compelling research, it can be firmly concluded that the identity of the X community, in which students actively participate, plays a crucial role in shaping individual identity. This identity is formed through consensual choices of online games and the agreed-upon rules that members internalize for each game. This community identity results in significant behavioral changes for its members, encompassing psychological and consumption behaviors. The impact of individual participation in online gaming communities is both positive and negative, contingent upon everyone's self-control and awareness. However, it is important to note that the scope of this research is limited to individual behavioral changes, highlighting the need for further research to explore the evolution of the community's identity.

Declaration of Ownership

This article is our original work.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest to declare in this article.

Ethical Clearance

This study was approved by the institution

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