

Escapism and Video Game Addiction in Adolescents

Kseniya S. Shalaginova

Tula State Pedagogical University. L.N. Tolstoy, Tula, Russia

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9037-449X>, e-mail: shalaginvakseniya99@yandex.ru

Elena V. Dekina

Tula State Pedagogical University. L.N. Tolstoy, Tula, Russia

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4995-9071>, e-mail: kmppedagogika@yandex.ru

Daria V. Klochneva

Tula State Pedagogical University. L.N. Tolstoy, Tula, Russia

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1031-0366>, e-mail: daraklocneva160@gmail.com

The article analyzes the problem of the formation of video game addiction in adolescents with a tendency to escapism. Escapism is considered as a predictor of video game addiction in adolescents in the information society, the motivation to escape from the fear of a trivial life and everyday difficulties in the virtual worlds of cyberspace. The study involved students of the Agricultural College of the city of Tula from 16 to 18 years old in the amount of 98 people. The purpose of the article is to provide a psychological and pedagogical analysis of the personality characteristics of adolescents that influence the formation of an addictive behavior model in relation to computer games. To achieve the goal of the study, the following psychological tools were used: the Thomas A. Tucker test (adapted by I.A. Konygina), the General Scale for Problematic Internet Use-3 (GPIUS-3) (A.A. Gerasimov, A.B. Kholmogorova), test "Scale for assessing the level of reactive and personal anxiety" Ch.D. Spielberg (adapted by Yu.L. Khanin), a questionnaire to identify the approximate time spent by teenagers on video game content, the test "Methodology for measuring the level of escapism" (T.N. Savchenko, O.I. Teslavskaya, E.V. Belovol, A.A. Kardapoltseva). The conducted study allows us to conclude that the parameter "escapism" is significantly correlated with the parameters "anxiety", "the degree of formation of a video game addict", as well as the time spent by a teenager on gaming content. There is a significant correlation of escapism with the parameter "negative consequences" from a computer game. It is worth noting the absence of a significant correlation between "flight" and "preference for online communication". The results of the study are considered by the authors in the context of solving the problems of preventive work with adolescents implementing an escapist strategy of behavior, preventing the development of video game addiction. The obtained empirical data confirm the expediency of taking into account the personality characteristics of adolescents in the psychological and pedagogical prevention of video game addiction in adolescents.

Keywords: teenager; escapism; digital generation; video game addiction; addictive behavior strategy.

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Эскапизм и видеоигровая аддикция у подростков

Шалагинова К.С.

ФГБОУ ВО «Тульский государственный педагогический университет им. Л.Н. Толстого»
(ФГБОУ ВО ТГПУ им. Л.Н. Толстого), г. Тула, Российская Федерация
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9037-449X>, e-mail: shalaginvaksenija99@yandex.ru

Декина Е.В.

ФГБОУ ВО «Тульский государственный педагогический университет им. Л.Н. Толстого»
(ФГБОУ ВО ТГПУ им. Л.Н. Толстого), г. Тула, Российская Федерация
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4995-9071>, e-mail: kmppedagogika@yandex.ru

Клочнева Д.А.

ФГБОУ ВО «Тульский государственный педагогический университет им. Л.Н. Толстого»
(ФГБОУ ВО ТГПУ им. Л.Н. Толстого), г. Тула, Российская Федерация
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1031-0366>, e-mail: daraklocneva160@gmail.com

В статье проводится анализ проблемы формирования видеоигровой зависимости у подростков со склонностью к эскапизму. Эскапизм рассматривается как предиктор видеоигровой зависимости у подростков в информационном обществе, мотивация бегства от страха тривиальной жизни и повседневных трудностей в виртуальные миры киберпространства. Статья содержит описание эмпирического исследования, направленного на выявление личностных особенностей подростков, оказывающих влияние на формирование аддиктивной модели поведения в отношении компьютерных игр. В исследовании приняли участие студенты сельскохозяйственного колледжа города Тулы от 16 до 18 лет в количестве 98 человек. Цель статьи состоит в психолого-педагогическом анализе личностных особенностей подростков, оказывающих влияние на формирование аддиктивной модели поведения в отношении компьютерных игр. Для достижения цели исследования был использован следующий психологический инструментарий: тест Томаса А. Такера (в адаптации И.А. Коньгиной), тест «Общая шкала проблемного использования интернета-3» (GPIUS-3) (А.А. Герасимов, А.Б. Холмогорова), тест «Шкала оценки уровня реактивной и личностной тревожности» Ч.Д. Спилберга (в адаптации Ю.Л. Ханина), анкета на выявление примерного времени, затрачиваемого подростками на видеоигровой контент, тест «Методика измерения уровня выраженности эскапизма» (Т.Н. Савченко, О.И. Теславская, Е.В. Беловол, А.А. Кардапольцева). Проведенное исследование позволяет сделать вывод о значимой корреляции параметра «эскапизм» с параметрами «тревожность», «степень сформированности видеоигрового аддикта», а также временем, затрачиваемым подростком на игровой контент. Имеет место значимая корреляция эскапизма с параметром «негативные последствия» от компьютерной игры. Стоит отметить отсутствие

значимой корреляции между «бегством» и «предпочтением online-общения». Результаты исследования авторы рассматривают в контексте решения задач профилактической работы с подростками, реализующими эскапистскую стратегию поведения, предупреждения развития видеоигровой аддикции. Полученные эмпирические данные подтверждают целесообразность учета личностных особенностей подростков при психолого-педагогической превенции видеоигровой аддикции у подростков.

Ключевые слова: подросток; эскапизм; цифровое поколение; видеоигровая зависимость; аддиктивная стратегия поведения.

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Introduction

The problem of studying the features of the formation of video-game addiction in adolescents with a tendency for escapism is of theoretical and practical importance. An adolescent who is in the epicenter of internal and external conflicts is most inclined to substitute the true picture of reality with its virtual equivalent, and to form an addictive behavior strategy based on the rejection of values and norms of society. Due to this, the tasks of prevention, diagnosis and correction of the behavior of adolescents prone to a high level of escapism arise.

Foreign studies of escapism of the 40-50s are devoted to the study of the influence of print media on the consciousness of workers (J.T. Clapper), those from the 60-80s are aimed at examining the motivation of tourists and travelers (D. Crompton, P. Riley, J. Dunn, S. Roberts); The 1990-2000s are associated with the study of escapism as a factor that affects the increase in the time spent by people before television screens (B.B. Henning, A. Evans, C. Paul); works after the 2000s and up to the present are focused on the consideration of game motivation and the study of escapism in the context of video game addiction (H. Warmelink, S.P. Jeng, N. Yee, D. Kuss, O. Lopez-Fernandez, I. Mayer, K.I. Teng, C. Harteveld, etc.). B.B. Henning proved the hypothesis of a positive correlation between "personal and psychological escapism" and the time spent by people watching television programs, A. Evans considered "escapism" as a natural mechanism that helps individuals meet basic needs for security and acceptance, and explained the development of mass escapism by the rapid growth of the opportunities of modern media culture [26, p. 210]. Strategies of "escapism" were considered on the materials of the analytical review of the achievements of modern media society and the digital space [17, p. 140]. N. Yee, S.P. Jeng, C.I. Teng considered escapism as a factor that induces the desire to participate in a video game [27; 30]. H. Warmelink, C. Harteveld, and I. Mayer noted that escapism can be a motive for the participation in a game [29]. S. Knobloch-Westerwick, M. R. Hastall, and M. Rossmann considered "escapism" as a coping strategy for coping with stress in conditions when external and/or internal demands do not coincide with a person's real resources [28].

In domestic literature, the topics of escapism and the features of the manifestation of escapist mentality were initiated in the late 1990s - early 2000s and are most represented in philosophy and sociology. It is in these spheres that the assumption about the implicit inclusion of "escapism" in the ethos of cybernetic culture and art was formulated, and the hypothesis about the

adaptive function of the mechanisms of escapist mentality was developed [5]. Sociological concepts considered escapism as "a social phenomenon that consists in the desire of an individual or part of a social group to escape from the generally accepted standards of social life" [2, p. 396]. Domestic psychologists developed this theory, freeing escapism from the stigma of a peculiar affective disorder that leads to the destructive transformation of the social existence of the individual. D.G. Litinskaya proposed the division of escapism into instrumental (serving the adaptation of the individual) and existential (representing "not so much an escape from the social world with its norms and routines into an alternative reality (games, subcultures, etc.) but as a conscious refusal to meet the Other" [12]. E.O. Trufanova divides escapism into "soft", which leads to a departure from "prescribed social activity", and "hard", consisting in the full immersion in otherworldliness [22]. E.N. Shapinskaya considered escapism as a new form of identity search, which can lead a person to a kind of mental disability in case of its excessively deep immersion in the cyberspace [25]. The author emphasizes the danger of the overly deep immersion in the cyber environment: "reality turns into hyperreality in the world of the computer screen, text turns into hypertext, and the user (subject) can hardly distinguish the real world from a virtual one" [24]. Researchers agree in accepting "escapism" as a normative mechanism of human consciousness, which is most clearly manifested against the background of life difficulties (E.V. Belovol, T.N. Savchenko, O.I. Teslavskaya). At the same time, the issues related to the study of correlation and the essential relations of escapism with the phenomenon of video-game addiction have not yet received proper practical development. T.N. Savchenko, O.I. Olkhina and others considered "escapism" as an inherent mechanism of personality regulation, which can be most clearly manifested as a result of "a reduced level of adaptation to the surrounding reality, primarily social" [19]. Scientists define escapism as a specific form of personality activity that arises due to the discrepancy between real and desired value structures. It is noted that individuals with a low level of escapism are much less inclined to gain new experience and knowledge about themselves, but they more easily enter the daily routine; excessive escapist are characterized by a complete immersion into meaningful activities, thanks to which they experience a sense of joy and a full life, but there are difficulties in returning to reality. It is harder for excessive escapist to realize their potential in the real world. The negative consequences of "escapism" are emphasized: deviant behavior, marginalization of society, etc. [16].

Escapism is one component in a complex sum of variables that influence the formation of video game addiction. Escapism acts as a key determinant of pathological video game addiction in adolescents; players with an escapist motivation spend more time online due to the increased share of social support online compared to the real world [23]. A trend in the development of research works related to the study of the phenomenon of escapism is emerging: the consideration of "escapism" as a strategy complementary to the formation and development of the leisure motivation of a person.

Modern psychological works integrate attention to both external and internal factors of "escapism", which is recognized as a normative mechanism, to a greater or lesser extent characteristic of human consciousness. There is an interest in systemizing the manifestations of escapism with the identification of adaptive and maladaptive, destructive traits in it. Currently, the focus of research is shifting towards the study of the relationship between escapism and the phenomenon of video-game addiction. Despite the obvious advantages - the growth of contacts and the volume of consumed information, the phenomenon of virtualization imposes a negative impact on interpersonal relations, pushing the individual "to voluntary capitulation to social life in favor of

an artificially created virtual concept" [6]. Especially vulnerable in this regard are adolescents who are characterized by the need for communication [11]. E.I. Isaev notes that it is important for adolescents to realize themselves in behavior and relationships, to master the skills of social interaction [7, p. 281].

The abrupt withdrawal into the virtual world can disrupt the natural process of the formation of adolescent identity [10, p. 40]. The study by I.V. Sultanova and A.A. Mamonova shows that 60% of adolescents with Internet-dependent behavior are dominated by "secrecy, alienation, mistrust, unsociability, isolation, difficulties in establishing interpersonal contacts" [21]. E.Yu. Kazarinova and A.B. Kholmogorova found that the indicators of Internet addiction at the level of tendency are higher among adolescents compared to students, there is an increase in the time spent on the Internet, the loss of control over it, the cognitive absorption in what happens on the Internet [8]. D.A. Klochneva considers escapism in the space of adolescent subculture [9]. Psychologists presented a standardized version of the "Index of Immersion in the Internet Environment" questionnaire for adolescents [18]. M.I. Eliseeva and E.E. Krieger, describing the characteristics of child-parent relations among adolescents addicted to online games, note disharmonious relations with both the mother and the father [6]. A.A. Maslova considers the adolescents dialog with a virtual interlocutor as the mediation in the development of communicative competence [13].

Escapism in adolescence can be seen as a withdrawal motivated by the desire to escape from a complex, contradictory reality. In the context of video game addiction, escapism is a motivation to escape from the fear of life and everyday difficulties into the virtual worlds of the cyberspace. At low to medium levels of escapism, this strategy is advantageous. However, with the prolonged fixation of mental energy on virtual projections there is a noticeable distortion of cognitive, emotional and behavioral functions, which in time leads to the formation of video-game addiction.

Adolescence is the most sensitive to the influence of media resources, escapism, which debuts against the background of illusory digital idols. In older adolescence, the ability for reflection develops, the desire to understand oneself and achieve a chosen ideal increases [3]. The existential escape into the world of cybernetic abstractions can be the answer to the discrepancy of these needs with the possibilities set by the rigid framework of real-life conditions. A.K. Streltsova notes that today we have two paths: "the first is to escape to a reality invented by someone else, to a TV series about ideal love filmed by someone else or a video game written by someone else, and the second is to invent this new reality ourselves" [20]. It is relevant to study the relationship between the phenomenon of "escapism" and video game addiction in adolescence.

Materials and Methods

The base of the study was the "Tula Agricultural College named after I.S. Efanov". All the subjects were adolescents of both genders aged from 16 to 18 years old. The study involved 98 students, of whom 56 were girls and 42 were boys. Diagnostics were carried out in small groups in the "Law and Organization of Social Security", "Gardening and Landscape Construction" areas of training and individually.

The main hypothesis of the study: escapism is related with video game addiction, specifically, the higher the level of escapism, the higher the level of development of video game addiction is.

The partial hypotheses of the study are:

1. Escapism is related with the amount of time the adolescent spends on video game content: the higher the escapism parameter, the more hours the child spends playing;
2. Escapism is related with anxiety, specifically, the higher the level of escapism, the higher the level of personal anxiety;
3. Escapism is related with the development of negative consequences from playing, specifically, the higher the level of escapism, the stronger the negative consequences of playing are;
4. Escapism is related with the preference for "online-communication", specifically, the higher the level of escapism, the more often the adolescent resorts to communication through the digital environment.

The structure of the study included the following stages:

1. Theoretical analysis of the material, the generalization of available research and knowledge on the problem, classification;
2. Empirical research;
3. Quantitative and qualitative processing of the results.

The diagnostic program is represented by the following methods: the Thomas A. Tucker (adapted by I.A. Konygina) [14]; the "General Problematic Internet Use Scale-3" (GPIUS-3) test (A.A. Gerasimov, A.B. Kholmogorova) [4]; the "Scale for Assessing the Level of Reactive and Personal Anxiety" test by C.D. Spielberg (adapted by Yu. Khanin) [15]; the questionnaire to identify the approximate time spent by children on video-game content (the author's version); the "Method for Measuring the Level of Escapism" test (T.N. Savchenko, O.I. Teslavskaya, E.V. Belovol, A.A. Kardapoltseva) [19].

The scientific, methodological and methodical foundations of the program: the program is based on the study of the problem of video-game addiction, as well as its relation with the concept of the escapist mentality (A.A. Belovol, D.G. Litinskaya, O.I. Teslavskaya, E.O. Trufanova, T.N. Savchenko, etc.).

To analyze the data obtained during the course of the study, the nonparametric correlation coefficient of C. Spearman was applied in order to identify the relationship between variables in the rank scale. To identify the influence of the gender factor on the formation of the negative consequences of playing, Fisher's criterion was used to compare two series of sample values by the frequency of the occurrence of a trait.

Results of the Study

Checking the sample for the normality of the distribution of the trait on the "anxiety" (personal) and "escapism" scales showed that the skewness and module kurtosis is greater than their standard errors, which clearly indicates the need to apply the nonparametric Spearman correlation coefficient. The correlation between the studied parameters, medians are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
				Statistics	Standard Error	Statistics	Standard Error
Anxiety	42,64	42,00	11,11	0,35	0,24	-1,21	0,48
Escapism	112,91	121,00	9,08	-0,59	0,24	-1,10	0,48
Development of „Negative Consequences”	7,85	8,00	4,54	-0,01	0,24	-1,47	0,48
Preference for Online-Communication	9,95	9,00	5,27	1,00	0,24	0,20	0,48
Degree of Formation of Video Game Addiction	6,80	5,00	5,46	1,06	0,24	0,23	0,48

Correlation between the studied parameters is given in Table 2.

Table 2

Correlation Indices (Spearman Correlation Coefficients) Between the Studied Parameters

	Anxiety	Degree of Formation of Video Game Addiction	Development of „Negative Consequences”	Preference for Online-Communication	Time Spent Playing
Escapism	0,52**	0,38**	0,23*	0,02	0,43**

Notes: * - $p < 0.05$ (unilateral); ** - $p < 0.01$ (unilateral).

The analysis of the relationship between the "anxiety" and "escapism" parameters showed a significant correlation coefficient (0.518), which indicates the presence of a high level of connection between the presented variables.

When considering the relationship between the level of escapism and the degree of formation of the level of addiction to video games (and the possibility of developing negative consequences) according to the T.A. Tucker questionnaire, a significant correlation coefficient (0.381) was revealed, which indicates the presence of a high level of connection between these variables.

The level of escapism has a high correlation coefficient (0.233) with the development of negative consequences from playing (according to the GPIUS-3 questionnaire), but the relationship of "escapism" with the "preference for online-communication" criterion was not revealed.

When analyzing the relationship between the level of escapism and game time, a significant correlation coefficient (0.427) was found at the level of $p \leq 0.01$, which indicates a high level of connection between these variables.

According to the calculations carried out using Fisher's criterion, the factor of gender is not associated with the value of the trait of the presence of negative consequences from playing (the

empirical value of the criterion is in the zone of insignificance).

Discussion of the Results

When considering the relationship between the level of escapism and the degree of formation of the level of addiction to video games (and the possibility of developing negative consequences) according to the questionnaire of T.A. Tucker, a significant correlation coefficient (0.381) was revealed, which indicates the presence of a high level of connection between these variables, and also confirms the main hypothesis of the study.

Private hypotheses about the relationship of escapism with the development of negative consequences from playing, anxiety and game time were also confirmed **at a significant level**, but the connection of "escapism" with the "preference for online-communication" criterion was not revealed.

The results of the conducted experiment largely confirm the data of domestic and foreign publications devoted to the problems of escapism in the cyberspace. Thus, the work indirectly confirms the idea of A.A. Gerasimova and A.B. Kholmogorova about the use of the cyberspace as a way of coping with negative emotions [4, p. 68], as well as the thesis of E.V. Belovol and A.A. Kardapoltseva that "the form of "negative escapism", ... defined as an escape from problems, is a protective strategy of avoiding a frightening, contradictory reality" [1, p. 46].

The conducted research work is also consistent with the earlier foreign findings of S.P. Jeng and C.I. Teng, who considered escapism as a factor that induces the desire to participate in a video game [27; 30], as well as with the data given by H. Warmelink, C. Harteveld and I. Mayer, who noted the role of escapism in game motivation [29].

Interestingly, examining the gender aspect did not make significant differences in the results of the study. This issue needs a deeper and more thorough elaboration.

It seems important to note the features of the formation of video-game addiction in adolescents with a tendency for escapism. The following can be attributed to them:

- escapism is the motivation of escape from the fear of trivial life and everyday difficulties into the virtual worlds of the cyberspace, at the low and medium level of escapism this strategy is advantageous, at a long fixation on deceptive virtual projections there is a noticeable distortion of cognitive, emotional and behavioral functions, which in time leads to the formation of videogame addiction;

- the lack of volitional control over the amount of time spent playing video games can be considered as the marker and the condition for the formation of an addict;

- "excessive" escapists with an increased level of personal anxiety are predominantly in the "risk group";

- reducing the risks of forming a video game addiction by reducing the time spent by adolescents on video game content, as well as creating the conditions for the normalization of intra-family relations;

- the formation of constructive models of coping with stress and other negative experiences in adolescents.

The uncontrolled temporality of gaming processes, which is not so much a marker as a condition for the formation of addiction, requires the search for new tools for preventive work to prevent the development of video-game addiction, as well as the formation of more adaptive ways of coping with frustration and stress in adolescents, excluding the transgression of consciousness into the world of virtual illusions.

Conclusion

We define escapism as a kind of coping, which the child resorts to in a situation of the discrepancy between requirements and available vital resources. Taking into account the negative consequences associated with the excessive use of this strategy in everyday life, we believe that the main psychological and pedagogical problem at this stage is the creation of conditions for the formation of adaptive ways of coping with frustration and failure in the child, i.e. algorithms that exclude the transgression of consciousness into the world of virtual illusions.

Reducing the risks of the development of video game addiction in adolescents prone to a high level of escapism is possible with the combination of the following psychological and pedagogical factors: the implementation of an individual approach to each child; the formation of an optimal behavior strategy through the participation of an adolescent prone to escapism in group forms of work aimed at the development of psychological self-regulation skills; the implementation of psychological and pedagogical support at all stages of the study by means of individual consultations (for parents and teachers of adolescents prone to a high degree of escapism), using elements of art-therapeutic and body-oriented practices to harmonize the psycho-emotional state of the adolescent.

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Information about the authors

Kseniya S. Shalaginova, PhD in Psychology, Leading Research Associate, Associate Professor, Chair of Psychology and Pedagogy, Tula State Pedagogical University. L.N. Tolstoy, Tula, Russia, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9037-449X>, e-mail: shalaginvaksenija99@yandex.ru

Elena V. Dekina, PhD in Psychology, Leading Research Associate, Associate Professor, Chair of Psychology and Pedagogy, Tula State Pedagogical University. L.N. Tolstoy, Tula, Russia, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4995-9071>, e-mail: kmpppedagogika@yandex.ru

Darya A. Klochneva, Master's student, Tula State Pedagogical University. L.N. Tolstoy; teacher-psychologist of the I.S. Efanov Tula Agricultural College, Tula, Russia, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1031-0366>, e-mail: daraklochneva160@gmail.com

Информация об авторах

Шалагинова Ксения Сергеевна, кандидат психологических наук, доцент кафедры психологии и педагогики, ФГБОУ ВО «Тульский государственный педагогический университет им. Л.Н. Толстого» (ФГБОУ ВО ТГПУ им. Л.Н. Толстого), г. Тула, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9037-449X>, e-mail: shalaginvaksenija99@yandex.ru

Декина Елена Викторовна, кандидат психологических наук, доцент кафедры психологии и педагогики, ФГБОУ ВО «Тульский государственный педагогический университет им. Л.Н. Толстого» (ФГБОУ ВО ТГПУ им. Л.Н. Толстого), г. Тула, Российская Федерация, ORCID:

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<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4995-9071>, e-mail: kmpppedagogika@yandex.ru

Клочнева Дарья Андреевна, магистрант, ФГБОУ ВО «Тульский государственный педагогический университет им. Л.Н. Толстого» (ФГБОУ ВО ТГПУ им. Л.Н. Толстого); педагог-психолог, ГПОУ ТО «Тульский сельскохозяйственный колледж им. И.С. Ефанова», г. Тула, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1031-0366>, e-mail: daraklochneva160@gmail.com

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