

Perception of Philosophy Students on the Impact of Mobile Legends on Spiritual Growth of Students at the Faculty of Philosophy Surya Nusantara Adventist University

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A B S T R A C T

This research aims to understand the views of theology students on the use of Mobile Legends in their spiritual growth, identify the impacts of their Mobile Legends playing habits, and analyze whether these habits can hinder spiritual growth. This study uses a qualitative approach with observation, interview, and documentation methods. The research subjects were 14 philosophy students at Surya Nusantara Adventist University who have the habit of playing Mobile Legends. The results of this study indicate that Mobile Legends can have a negative impact on the spiritual growth of Philosophy students, such as experiencing a decline in spirituality due to game addiction, neglect of worship time and spiritual priorities, and the emergence of negative emotions while playing. Factors influencing this impact include personality, motivation, and gaming environment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since its initial release in 2016, Mobile Legends has become one of the most popular Esports in Indonesia (Annur, 2023). This is evidenced by the 2025 Esports World Cup, where the Mobile Legends tournament attracted over three million concurrent viewers, a number superior to any other game (Saut, 2025). According to Rivi Handayani (2018), the high popularity of Mobile Legends is fueled by a strong fan base community that provides a collective identity for young people. In this community, Mobile Legends fans are no longer passive users but instead function to "actively shape popular culture while simultaneously contributing to community culture" (Handayani, 2018, p. 142).

Research shows that the Mobile Legends game can foster unity within communities, increase tolerance for differences, and strengthen solidarity among players (Arifin, Darmayanti, & Manda, 2024). However, on the other hand, Mobile Legends also brings negative impacts, particularly in the spiritual aspect. This is demonstrated by research conducted by Muhammad Ngali (2020) on adolescents in Sriwedari Village, Magelang. He found that teenagers addicted to Mobile Legends tend to neglect religious worship, behave impolitely, and have a poor understanding of social ethics (Ngali, 2020).

This contradiction is the focus of this research. While the positive impacts on the social-communal

aspect have been identified, the impact of online games on the spiritual aspect, particularly among Philosophy students, remains an underexplored area. The authors observed how the phenomenon of playing Mobile Legends has become commonplace in the Philosophy faculty. Nearly half of the students use their free time and even their nightly rest hours to play Mobile Legends.

This presents an ironic situation, considering that Philosophy students are individuals specifically trained to become spiritual leaders. They are required to prioritize spiritual growth and closeness with God as the foundation for their future ministry. Therefore, research on how their interaction with Mobile Legends influences their spiritual growth becomes highly relevant and urgent. This study aims to bridge this gap by conducting an in-depth exploration of Philosophy students' perceptions regarding the impact of Mobile Legends on their spiritual growth.

Based on the background described above, several problems can be identified: (1) The majority of Philosophy students at STFT Surya Nusantara are unaware of the effects and influence of their habit of playing Mobile Legends on their spiritual growth; (2) There are no studies showing the impact of playing Mobile Legends on spiritual life. Therefore, further research is needed to discover what these effects and influences are. (3) The students lack knowledge of solutions that can train them to exercise self-control, particularly regarding playing the Mobile Legends game.

Based on the background of the problem, several key issues can be identified. The primary concern is that the majority of Philosophy students at STFT Surya Nusantara are unaware of the effects and influence their habit of playing Mobile Legends has on their spiritual growth. This lack of awareness is compounded by the fact that there are no existing studies specifically examining the impact of playing Mobile Legends on spiritual life, necessitating further research to discover what these effects are. Furthermore, the students themselves lack knowledge of practical solutions that could train them to exercise self-control, particularly regarding their gameplay.

Stemming from this problem identification, the purpose of this research is to understand the perspective of Philosophy students on the use of Mobile Legends in their spiritual growth. It aims to identify the impacts of this habit on the students and to analyze whether playing Mobile Legends can actually hinder their spiritual development. To address these questions, the research will investigate whether the habit increases, decreases, or has no effect on spiritual growth. It will also explore the role of factors like personality, motivation, and gaming environment in this influence. Finally, a key question is whether this habit can paradoxically increase students' motivation to engage in spiritual activities such as worship, religious study, and applying religious teachings in their daily lives.

2. METHODOLOGY

Metode penelitian yang akan digunakan adalah metode kualitatif. Adapun metode ini dipilih karena penelitian kualitatif adalah metode penelitian yang digunakan untuk mengeksplorasi dan memahami fenomena sosial secara mendalam dari sudut pandang subjek penelitian (Nasution, 2003). Subjek penelitian adalah sebanyak 14 mahasiswa filsafat. Ada dua kriteria yang digunakan. Pertama, mereka haruslah mahasiswa filsafat yang terdaftar di Universitas Advent Surya Nusantara. Kedua, mereka merupakan pemain *mobile legends* aktif yang bermain setiap hari. Penelitian ini dilakukan di wilayah kampus Universitas Advent Surya Nusantara pada bulan Agustus 2023-April 2024.

Three data collection methods were used: observation, interviews, and documentation (Moleong, 2007). The interview method employed was structured interviews (Mardawani, 2020). The interviewer asked questions that had been systematically prepared according to the core issues of this research. In this study, the authors interviewed 14 philosophy students, consisting of 3 first-year students, 3 second-year students, 4 third-year students, and 4 fourth-year students. Each interviewed individual will use a pseudonym to protect their identity. Participants will also receive a consent letter stating their willingness to be part of the research. The interview process will be recorded and later transcribed. Participants will receive their interview transcripts, and upon their approval, the

researchers will proceed with the research process. Below is the structure of the interview instrument used:

No.	Questions
1.	How did you first start playing Mobile Legends? Who introduced it to you?
2.	How often do you play?
3.	how do you play with?
4.	What changes have you felt in yourself after developing the habit of playing Mobile Legends?
5.	What positive impacts have you experienced?
6.	What negative impacts have you experienced?
7.	How does playing Mobile Legends affect your spiritual life?
8.	Does playing Mobile Legends bring you closer to God?
9.	Are you still able to control your playing habits?
10.	What advice would you share with other Philosophy students for balancing playing Mobile Legends with spiritual growth?

Fig. 1 Interview Questions

This research uses triangulation techniques in data collection. This triangulation technique combines three approaches: observation, interviews, and documentation. It is hoped that by using triangulation, the data obtained will be stronger and more substantiated.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The subjects of this research are first-year, second-year, third-year, and fourth-year Philosophy students. The authors interviewed 14 Philosophy students, consisting of 3 first-year students (Golden, Vito, Cello), 3 second-year students (Mr. Bomb, Mr. Dimas, Dane), 4 third-year students (Aghony, Dimas, Mr. Tono, Suho), and 4 fourth-year students (Mr. Beard, Mr. Tartar, Dux, Budi). In this section, the researchers will present the results and findings based on the research questions outlined earlier.

3.1 Research Question 1: Does the habit of playing Mobile Legends increase, decrease, or have no effect on the spiritual growth of Philosophy students at Surya Nusantara Adventist University?

Research Finding 1: Twelve out of fourteen participants (Mr. Beard 16 and 17, Mr. Bomb 11, Budi 11 and 12, Dimas 12, Mr. Tono 13 and 14, Suho 10, Vito 12 and 9, Cello 12, Mr. Dimas 12, Dane 13, Mr. Tartar 14, Golden 12) experienced a decline in spirituality due to playing Mobile Legends. They admitted that their gaming habits caused them to neglect regular worship times, reduced their ability to prioritize spiritual matters, and triggered negative emotions while playing. Only one participant (Dux 13) stated that Mobile Legends had no influence on their spirituality.

The experiences of these twelve participants align with the theory of addiction proposed by M.D. Griffiths (2000), which is characterized by a loss of self-control, excessive focus on gaming, and neglect of other aspects of life, including spirituality. The participants' tendency to prioritize gaming is consistent with what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) described—an author who emphasizes the sensation of "flow," particularly when a person becomes deeply engrossed in an activity they enjoy. This sensation leads to a loss of self-regulation and fosters laziness toward studying and worship.

3.2 Research Questions 2: Do factors such as personality, motivation, or gaming environment play a role in the influence of the Mobile Legends playing habit on the spiritual growth of Philosophy students at Surya Nusantara Adventist University?

Research Findings 2: Personality significantly influences gaming habits. Two participants (Golden, Aghony) preferred playing Mobile Legends alone, while seven others (Beard, Budi, Tono, Vito, Cello, Dimas, and Dane) preferred playing with friends and spent several hours daily doing so. Their motivations also varied considerably: five participants (Golden, Budi, Tono, Cello, Mr. Dimas) played to fill their free time, while four others (Dux, Budi, Suho, and Vito) played to make new friends or build social connections. Regarding their gaming environment, 12 respondents (Beard, Tartar, Bomb, Dux, Budi, Dimas, Tono, Suho, Vito, Cello, Dimas, and Dane) always played the game with campus friends or friends from their hometowns. This demonstrates how the habit of playing Mobile Legends is a communal activity that fosters social bonds.

Additionally, the participants were aware of the negative impacts they experienced. Four participants (Beard, Golden, Bomb, and Tono) admitted that playing Mobile Legends caused them to lose track of time and neglect spiritual activities. Six participants (Beard, Bomb, Suho, Cello, Dimas, and Vito) also acknowledged that Mobile Legends triggered negative emotions or the use of harsh language during gameplay. However, only five participants (Tartar, Dux, Budi, Tono, and Suho) felt that Mobile Legends distanced their relationship with God.

The participants' tendency to neglect spiritual aspects and social ethical values while playing Mobile Legends aligns with the theory of individualism proposed by Markus and Conner (2001). They argue that when individuals intensely engage in activities they find

pleasurable, they tend to disregard social interactions and closeness with God in pursuit of personal gratification (Markus & Conner, 2001). This resonates with Viktor Frankl's (1963) teaching that humans must find meaning in their lives—in this context, the participants seek meaning through Mobile Legends. When they find meaning in collective activities aimed at achieving higher ranks in the game, they neglect religious and spiritual routines that should be their top priority.

3.3 Research Question 3: Can the habit of playing Mobile Legends increase Philosophy students' motivation to worship, study religion, or apply religious teachings in their daily reality?

Research Findings 3: No, quite the opposite. All participants honestly expressed how Mobile Legends made it difficult for them to exercise self-control and provoked excessive negative emotions, especially when they lost. Three participants (Beard, Bomb, and Tono) stated that the habit of playing Mobile Legends served as a mechanism to escape from problems in their lives. Ten participants (Tartar, Dux, Budi, Dimas, Tono, Suho, Vito, Cello, Dimas, and Dane) acknowledged that peer influence was a major factor driving the development of their gaming habit. These observations demonstrate that the habit of playing Mobile Legends does not enhance philosophy students' motivation to worship, study, or apply religious teachings in their daily lives.

The relationship between gaming habits and lack of self-control aligns with what Baumeister and Tierney (2012) emphasize. These authors argue that habits related to self-gratification can deplete an individual's capacity for self-regulation. This theory substantiates why the habit of playing Mobile Legends or other games should be approached cautiously by philosophy students at Surya Nusantara Adventist University.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the conducted research, it can be concluded that the majority of participants experienced a decline in spirituality due to gaming addiction, neglect of regular worship time, and failure to prioritize spiritual matters. They also reported that playing Mobile Legends often triggered excessive negative emotions during gameplay. Most participants played collectively with close friends and peers in their dormitories. They found satisfaction and enjoyment in achieving victories in Mobile Legends. However, despite these feelings, they were also aware of the negative impacts on themselves, particularly in terms of spirituality and worship routines.

5. SUGGESTION

Based on the research findings, discussion, and conclusions presented by the researchers, the following suggestions are offered as input and considerations for

motivating philosophy students at Surya Nusantara Adventist University:

1. Philosophy students should be aware of the potential negative impacts of Mobile Legends on spirituality, such as addiction, negative emotions, and neglect of worship time.
2. Philosophy students should strictly limit their Mobile Legends gameplay time and create a balanced schedule that includes spiritual activities such as worship, religious study, and positive self-reflection.
3. Philosophy students should replace the habit of playing Mobile Legends with positive spiritual activities such as reading the Bible, prayer, meditation, and participating in spiritual communities.
4. Philosophy students should join Bible study groups or communities that support spiritual growth and encourage mutual accountability in maintaining spiritual commitments.

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