
Fatherhood in frames: A Qualitative Study of Gamer Dads' Stories of Parenting and Gaming

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ABSTRACT

There are several challenges faced by enthusiastic gamer fathers in balancing their responsibilities as parents and gamers. Thus, delving into the lived experiences of gamer dads, examining the difficulties they encountered in effectively allocating time between gaming and parenting, as well as the strategies they employed to cope with the tensions that arose from this dual engagement. The findings highlighted the critical importance of time management and prioritization for gamer dads. The study revealed that finding a suitable balance between indulging in gaming and fulfilling their parental duties was a significant challenge. The shift in priorities that occurred upon becoming a parent required gamer dads to reevaluate how they spent their time, often resulting in a reduced amount of time available for gaming. This adjustment could evoke feelings of guilt and longing for the extensive gaming sessions they once enjoyed and providing practical tips and insights to help gaming fathers achieve a healthy equilibrium between their passion for gaming and their responsibilities as parents. It emphasized the significance of self-awareness, effective time management, and open communication within the family to attain this balance.

INTRODUCTION

The connection between family and the community is a crucial element in people's life, impacting their actions, convictions, and general welfare. Piotrowski et al. (2020) conducted study highlighting the significant influence of community support on family dynamics and well-being. This study highlights the relationship between community engagement and family operation, proposing that community assistance can have a beneficial impact on family bonds, adaptability, and general well-being.

Supportive communities can provide families with improved social connections, access to resources, and a feeling of belonging. These elements enhance the support system for families, perhaps resulting in better mental health, decreased stress, and higher happiness with family life. Community involvement offers families chances for social interaction, skill development, and access to services that support good growth and well-being through generations (Piotrowski & Lapierre, 2020). Parenting is a highly transformational experience that significantly influences individuals' identities, values, and lives. Parenting is a multifaceted journey that involves various challenges and benefits, requiring in-depth investigation to understand its complexity fully.

Nelson et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of studying several components of parenthood, such as emotions, cognition, behavior, and relationships involved in raising

children. Fletcher and Romero (2021) elaborated that parenthood involves managing various aspects like self-identity development, emotional control, decision-making, and interpersonal connections, as shown in the literature. For example, becoming a parent can cause people to reassess their personal objectives, priorities, and ambitions, which might result in their developing fresh viewpoints and effective coping strategies. Parents must properly regulate their emotions to ensure good child-rearing practices and sustain healthy family dynamics.

On the other hand, dads are typically viewed as the family's provider and guardian. They are essential to their children's development because they provide direction, discipline, and emotional support. Studies have demonstrated that engaged fathers positively impact children by enhancing their self-esteem, academic achievement, and social abilities. Moreover, fathers influence a child's behavior, values, and beliefs by modeling proper behavior and via their relationships with them (Dilafroz, 2022). Fathers are essential in shaping child development and influencing family dynamics. Parke and Cookston (2019) state that fathers play a role in promoting beneficial child outcomes such as increased self-esteem, enhanced academic achievement, and stronger social skills. Fathers influence a child's behavior, values, and beliefs through their interactions and demonstration of proper behavior.

Parents that are also enthusiastic gamers face a special issue when it comes to juggling parenthood and gaming in the digital age. It is imperative for parents to be actively involved in their children's life even as they immerse themselves in virtual worlds and online groups. The ability to self-awareness, abilities in time management, and open communication within the family are all necessary components in order to achieve a balance between gaming and parenting (The New York Times, 2019).

This research aims to understand the challenges faced by gaming fathers and provide practical tips to help them balance gaming and family life better. It will offer insights and advice to help fathers manage their time, set boundaries, and maintain strong family connections while enjoying their gaming hobbies. The goal is to support gaming fathers in finding a healthy balance between their passion for gaming and their responsibilities as parents.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study examines the difficulties experienced by fathers who are enthusiastic gamers in balancing their responsibilities as both parents and gamers. It specifically aimed to: 1. Explore the lived experiences of gamer dads in managing the intersection of their gaming pursuits and parental duties; 2. Identify the challenges that gamer dads encounter when attempting to allocate time effectively between gaming activities and their responsibilities as parents; 3. Examine the strategize and cope with the tensions that arise from balancing their engagement in gaming with fulfilling their roles as fathers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A. Respondents

The respondents of this study are avid gamers who has an average gametime of more than 4 hours a day and generally a father of at least one (1) child.

B. Research Design

Phenomenological approach using descriptive phenomenology was employed in this study as the research design, to obtain the data on the process, challenges as well as the ways to address the challenges of being a father and an avid gamer. Phenomenology is one of many types of qualitative research that examines the lived experiences of humans. Phenomenology is useful in the identification of variation in student experience to examine learning disparities (Newton, and Martin, 2013).

C. Instrument

This study utilizes guide questions which are validate by experts.

D. Data Analysis

The data that were collected in this study were analyzed using Collaizzi's methods. This qualitative method enables the researcher to uncover the essence of the informants' experiences through emerging themes (Wirihana et al, 2018). To ensure the study's rigor, member checking was conducted by returning the responses to the respondents to verify if their responses were accurately interpreted. By quoting the significant statements of the informants, the authenticity and validity of the data will be established.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

On the challenges they have encountered being a gamer and a Father

Emerging theme 1: Time Management and Prioritization

The theme that emerges on the challenges they have encountered revolves around the challenges faced by gamer dads in effectively managing their time and making appropriate priorities between gaming and their roles as fathers. The responses within this theme highlight the difficulties and conflicts that arise when trying to balance gaming as a personal interest with the responsibilities and demands of parenting. This theme is supported by the following response;

“The biggest challenge I have faced is finding time to play games while also taking care of my child. Especially I am getting used to play online games extensively before. Yet, I always have this urged to play games but I have to stop it and help my wife to take care of our child.”

- Respondent 1

This emphasizes the struggle of finding time to indulge in gaming while also fulfilling parental duties. The respondent mentions that they used to play games extensively before becoming a father, but now they have to prioritize helping their wife take care of their child. This indicates the shift in priorities that occurs when becoming a parent, where the needs of the child and the family take precedence over personal leisure activities like gaming. Furthermore, this highlights the challenge faced by gamer dads in finding time for gaming while also fulfilling their parental duties. The respondent acknowledges that they used to engage in gaming extensively before becoming a father, indicating that their gaming habits had to undergo a significant adjustment after having a child.

Becoming a parent often brings about a shift in priorities. The needs of the child and the family become paramount, requiring gamer dads to reevaluate how they spend their time. In this case, the respondent mentions the importance of prioritizing helping their wife take care of their child over indulging in gaming. This signifies a recognition of the increased responsibilities and demands that come with parenthood.

The shift in priorities can result in a reduced amount of time available for gaming. Gamer dads may need to sacrifice or limit their gaming activities in order to fulfill their parental duties effectively. This can lead to a sense of longing or nostalgia for the extensive gaming sessions they used to enjoy before becoming fathers.

Moreover, the mention of helping their wife indicates the recognition of the importance of shared responsibilities in parenting. The respondent acknowledges that supporting their spouse in childcare tasks is crucial, and this may require them to put aside personal leisure activities like gaming. It demonstrates the need for cooperation and teamwork within the family unit to ensure the well-being and proper care of the child. The second response that supports the theme is as follows;

“It can be difficult to balance my gaming time with my responsibilities as a father, and I often feel guilty for spending time on games (DotA) instead of with my child. I even feel pity on my wife since she always took majority of the responsibilities at home.”

- Respondent 2

Stockdale and Coyne (2020) delved into the impact of video game engagement on parental efficacy, focusing on both mothers and fathers. Their study revealed a direct correlation between video game engagement and decreased parental efficacy in parents. This correlation implies that the time and attention invested in gaming activities can impede parents' capacity to effectively fulfill their parenting responsibilities. It also suggests that when parents, regardless of gender, allocate significant amounts of time to playing video games, it can lead to a reduction in their perceived effectiveness as parents. This decrease in parental efficacy may manifest in various ways, such as challenges in maintaining discipline, providing emotional support, or engaging in meaningful interactions with their children. The study indicates that the demands of gaming, which require time, focus, and mental engagement, can compete with the attention and energy needed for effective parenting.

On the solutions on how to balance being a gamer and a Father

Emerging theme 1: Establishing and adhering to a Schedule

This theme emerged from the responses of participants who emphasized the importance of setting a schedule for gaming and sticking to it as a way to balance their gaming hobby with their responsibilities as fathers. By establishing specific times dedicated to gaming, participants can allocate time for their personal enjoyment while ensuring that they fulfill their parental duties. Adhering to the schedule helps create a sense of structure and predictability, allowing individuals to manage their time effectively and avoid neglecting their parenting responsibilities. This theme suggests that by implementing a schedule, participants were able to find a balance between their gaming interests and their role as fathers. This theme is supported by the following statement:

“I have started setting boundaries around my gaming time, such as only playing during certain hours of the day or not playing on weeknights.”
– Respondent 3

Several studies have explored this concept of scheduling gaming time as a strategy for work-life balance among parents. A qualitative study by Coyne et al. (2017) found that parents who set boundaries and schedules around gaming were better able to manage their time and avoid neglecting their parental responsibilities. Similarly, a survey by Kowert et al. (2015) revealed that parents who adhered to a gaming schedule reported higher levels of life satisfaction and lower levels of family conflict compared to those who did not.

Establishing a schedule provides a sense of structure and predictability, which can be particularly beneficial for parents navigating the demands of childcare. Reer and Krämer (2018) noted that by allocating specific times for gaming, parents were able to better manage their time and avoid feelings of guilt or conflict that can arise when gaming interferes with parenting. This structured approach allows individuals to fulfill their parental duties while still carving out time for their personal interests and hobbies. Furthermore, research suggests that adhering to a gaming schedule can have positive effects on the parent-child relationship. A study by Coyne et al. (2015) found that when parents engaged in joint gaming activities with their children, it fostered stronger family bonds and improved communication. By setting aside dedicated gaming time, parents can create opportunities for shared experiences and bonding with their children.

Emerging Theme 2: Engaging in shared gaming experiences

The theme of engaging in shared gaming experiences emerged as participants described playing games with their children as a solution to balancing their gaming hobby with their fatherhood responsibilities. By involving their children in gaming activities, participants found a way to spend quality time with them while enjoying their hobby. This theme emphasizes the benefits of shared gaming experiences in creating bonds, fostering communication, and alleviating any guilt associated with gaming. Engaging in games together serves as a bridge between the gaming world and family dynamics, promoting connection and understanding. It is important to consider age-appropriate games and maintain a balanced approach to screen time. Overall, shared gaming experiences provide a solution for fathers to connect with their children while maintaining a healthy balance between gaming and parenting.

Thus, the theme is supported by this statement:

“I have found that communicating with my child about my gaming hobby and involving them in my hobby has helped reduce feelings of guilt.”
– Respondent 4

Recent research supports the benefits of shared gaming experiences between parents and children. A study by Coyne et al. (2020) found that when parents and children engaged in joint gaming, it led to stronger family bonds, improved communication, and a greater sense of shared interests. Similarly, a survey by Kowert and Oldmeadow (2015) revealed that parents who played games with their children reported higher levels of life satisfaction and lower levels of family conflict compared to those who did not.

Furthermore, a qualitative study by Reer et al. (2021) noted that shared gaming experiences allowed parents to alleviate any guilt associated with gaming by incorporating it into their family activities. By making gaming a shared experience, fathers were able to find a balance between their personal interests and their parental duties. However, it is important to consider the age-appropriateness of the games and maintain a balanced approach to screen time. A review by Przybylski and Weinstein (2019) emphasized the need for parents to establish clear guidelines and limits around gaming to ensure a healthy media diet for their children. By striking this balance, shared gaming experiences can serve as a valuable tool for fathers to connect with their children while fulfilling their parenting responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

The challenges faced by gamer dads in balancing their gaming hobby with their roles as fathers revolve around time management and prioritization. Becoming a parent requires a shift in priorities, often resulting in a reduced amount of time available for gaming. This shift can lead to feelings of guilt and longing for the extensive gaming sessions they used to enjoy. However, recognizing the importance of shared responsibilities in parenting and supporting their spouse in childcare tasks is crucial. Establishing and adhering to a gaming schedule helps create structure, manage time effectively, and reduce conflicts and guilt. Engaging in shared gaming experiences with their children provides a solution for gamer dads to connect with their children while enjoying their hobby, fostering communication, and reducing feelings of guilt.

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