THE CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ONLINE PLAYERS IN THE INTERNET CAFES OF JABODETABEK, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that many claims about online game addiction are not accurate and that criteria of addiction based on studies conducted in Western countries are not true. Through an ethnographic study based on the theory of Symbolic Interaction observing 152 online players in the neighbouring cities of Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang and Bekasi (Jabodetabek) in Java Island, Indonesia, was found that the online players' gaming behavior are locally and culturally contextualized which differentiate them from the typologies of online game players in the world. The majority of players indicated positive behaviors characterized by organized time management, interaction etiquette, and the presence of sensitivity of individuals within the community of online players.

Keywords: *Online Game, Ethnography, Symbolic Interaction, Labelling, Culture*

1. INTRODUCTION

Addiction to playing online games has become phenomenon of its own in the lives of modern day society. Online games are gaming applications played on the internet. Applications of this type have become easy to access from day to day with internet access spreading quickly amongst the public. Not only adult internet users but also adolescents and children can easily make the connection to *online gaming*.

With the emergence of smart phones the infiltration of communication technology into the daily life of we humans has penetrated even further. The use of these portable units has made it even easier for users to connect anywhere and everywhere, even while on the move.

The flexibility to use the internet via mobile devices of this type has presented us with a new generation of games online which we now commonly call *mobile games*. This new facility has now made it possible for internet users to no longer be tied to a specific location in order to play online.

As with other forms of games in general *online games* can provide players with what Csikszentmihalyi described as a being a *flow experience* (See: 1975 in Liu 2016). This experience also provides a certain stimulus which is both vexing and challenging. Online games provide an increasing level of difficulty at each level of the game so that the player is challenged to keep on going after he or she completes or overcomes certain hurdles. The completion of these levels of difficulty is usually accompanied by the provision of types of reward such as a number of items that can be used to confront the following hurdle. Besides this, each level of the game usually introduces new challenges, whether it be in the form of new types of hurdles, new location, new enemies or new tools.

Based on the description above, it comes as no surprise that online games can cause players to

be unable to stop playing and to even ignore other activities.When a player becomes carried away with a game it becomes almost impossible for them to get away from them so that the player's social life becomes upset. It is that point which researchers describe the players condition as being 'addicted to games online'.

Nowadays the criteria in Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder-V (DSM-V) is commonly used by psyicologists and psychiatrists when performing examinations and diagnosis as to whether a person is experiencing addiction to *online gaming*. According to Wood (2008) use of the term video game addiction is reliant upon a weak scientific argument or assertion and more inclined towards public hysteria presented in the mass media. A number of studies have been made about computers, video games and internet addiction (Charlton & Danforth 2007) have rather demonstrated that the high levels of engagement by players has actually caused them to suffer other conditions of psycho-social problems than when compared to the criteria related to addiction. Therefore not all players of games online can be categorized as addicts and that it would be more precise to say that they are experiencing a bondage that upsets aspects of the player's social psychology.

As an entertainment media online games themselves are not dangerous. Based on the preliminary findings of this research, the researchers have shown that players of online games were enabled to get new friends and to study English in a way that was enjoyable. Granic (2014) found that playing online games could reduce stress, but, if the habit becomes an addiction, it could have negative effects on the mental health and the social life of a person. Addiction to games online could even cause some people to do things which were abnormal. In a number of cases, online games *addiction* had even caused some people to become involved in criminal activities. In one case from Blitar in East Java one school student was caught stealing from the headmaster's office to spend on sweets and play online games (*Tribunnews.com*, 24 March 2015). In another case in Magelang in January 2015 a student from a religious school stole funds from the alms box of a prayer house which he also planned to use to play online games at an internet cafe (*Merdeka.com*, 16 January 2015). A further case occurred in the city of Palembang in March 2015 where young man was cheeky enough to steal two birds and

their cages from his own cousin and he too had stolen because he needed money to play online games at an internet cafe. (palembang.tribunnews.com, 20 March 2015).

The aforesaid conditions are part of the developments in the world of communication, specifically in terms of internet information technology. Based on news posted by *Kompas* media on 26 March 2015 users of internet in Indonesia had reached 88,1 million users by 2015. According to a spokesman from the Ministry of Communication and Information, Ismail Cawidu, about 58.4 % of those internet users were aged between 12 and 34 years of age. They were connected to the internet for an average of around 5 hours perday and were using laptops or personal computers. Besides this they were using mobile units for a further 2 hours per day.

Data released by Antara News in March 2015 showed that the percentage of internet users could be divided into 62 million users who were active on social media and could be further divided to become 48% who used the internet to look for information and send electronic mail and another 35% who played games or other activities.

According to data recorded on the ligagame.com site, it was estimated that active game players on the internet numbered 6 million players or 10% of the total number of internet users whereas the number of passive internet game players was predicted to be 15 million players. This figure was taken from data about the more than 30 million *Facebook* users in Indonesia whereby the data indicated that 50% of these *Facebook* users had at some time used the available online gaming facilities. According to this site, the growth in the numbers of game players in Indonesia was 5 to 10% every year. This was caused by increases in internet infrastructure in Indonesia.

At the same, according to the internetsehat.id site, the average amount of time spent by game players experienced a sharp increase of 57% to become more than 2 hours per day in 2014 compared with conditions in 2012 when players spent an average of an hour and twenty minutes online.These game players ranged from the age of 6 to 44 years old while the greater number of users in 2014 were aged between 2 and 12 years

old. This group played higher games and as many as five games and bought as many as 3 paying games, which resulted in the amount being paid out by this age group to be the highest. In spite of this, a number of researchers refuse to accept that there is a connection between how long a person plays with their potential to become an addict. (Grusser, 2007; Sammis, 2008; Caplan, 2009; Arnessen, 2010; McBroom, 2013; Seok, 2014).

The collection of cases above proves that cases connected to online games become a reflection of the rapid development of information technology.Internet technology makes it possible where video games are no longer an isolated arena but rather an interactive space involving a lot of players and is like a world of its own. With regard to this it becomes important to understand online games and its addictveness from the point of view of those who experience it themselves. Via ethnographic research one can study online game addiction in its natural setting by placing it as a social phenomenon and not as psychological problem.

2. AIM OF THE RESEARCH

As a phenomena, online game addiction can be studied from a number of perspectives, such as psychological and social perspetives. This research will focus on studying the perception of online game addiction from the point of view of the online players who experience it themselves.

Besides focusing the observation on the online game addicts in context of their own activities, the research will try to form an explanation of how the battle fields provided by online games makes it possible for the players to become caught up in them so that they are seen by others as experiencing addiction. This research will also try to explain how these players who become caught up can continue to be involved in activities outside the world of online games.

This research is aimed at providing a contribution to the understanding of the living dynamics surrounding the players of games on line in Indonesia using a method of research that is rarely used by western researchers with regard to research directed towards developing the knowledge about the world of online gamers. The researchers found that there was only one

research (2013) made about the players of online games presented in an International Journal, which used the positivistic approach with survey methods. As the researchers found, there are few researches in the world about online games that use qualitative approaches, and especially ethnographic methods. During the period 2005 - 2016 there were only three research articles on the world of gaming using the ethnographic approach.

Indonesia with the fourth largest population in the world (262 million people)[1] certainly has game players with different characteristics when compared to game players globally. Throughout this ethnographic research, the researchers would wanted to view the behavior of game players in Indonesia, specificially those in the 'Jabodetabek' area (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi). As well as this, the researchers' approach to the theoretical symbols has not been used by global researchers in peeling off the layers of the lives of online-game players.

The research has resulted in breaking some myths and public anxiety reflected in negative exposed-publication of online game players in the world and in Indonesia. The research has found that game players in the Internet Café in Jabodetabek have a humanist character and behavior. They can maintain the ability function socially even though they are bound to keep playing games in the internet café. They also have social issues within their environment in the online game world. They do not become anti-social, as in the stigma attached to these game players by society and the media.

3. REVIEW OF SIMILAR RESEARCHES

Nowadays, what is in fact happening to humans is that they are becoming surrounded with tools that are designed to catch, to write and change words and which can even become an extension of our selves. This is what Kenneth Gergen (1991 : 74) described as being the phenomenon of multiphrenia, which is a condition whereby a person's identity is defined and formed by too many choices for self expression.

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[1] http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/indonesia-population/

"Websites are like shiftings sands. The Average life of a web page is 100 days. After that either it's changed or it disappears. So our intellectual society is built on sand". *Brewster Kahle* (Wood 2005:29)

Internet technology and its flows, have not only been changes in social communication technology but also in the culture of communication. The keywords of collaboration and independent control have broken through the hierachial structures and controls of the processes of interactive communication. Internet users are now living in a communication ecosystem enwrapped in an atmosphere of dialogue and debate which is known by the name of "blogosphere".

Each and every human is now linked in a kind of super-organism which seems to grow and in a dramatic way to change, not only in the form and process of communication but also in every aspect of human life. In the practical framework, this change has caused the creation of organically virtual social communities that have grown and developed alongside technological innovation. Several of these virtual communities have consumptive orientations. This has become a part of the pushing of consumerism and also an influence of commercial freedom to communicate on a mass and massive scale.

The forms of collaborative communication have given rise to a communal feeling within a number of online communities which we could call the online game community. This online game community is united in a new network lifestyle of online game's world. Technology makes it possible for anyone (without the limits of age, profession,tribe, race, religion or nationality) to be able to be a part of the online community and to communicate freely between member communities.

When we reflect on this it becomes apparent that this has also happened with the onlne game community, whereby a portion of the online game community have become trapped in the online game world. They have become like slaves to 24 hour online gaming. A number of researches have been made in countries where game addiction has become a spreading problem,

and this has been especially so in developed nations.

The characteristic of several other studies has been to try to discover the cause of online game addiction in terms of running away from the negative conditions in the lives of individual online game players themselves.Investigations by Grusser and associates (2007) and also Hussain and Griffiths (2009) showed that pressure of the game on the online player informants was their way to overcome the negative emotions, depression and fears that worried them in their daily lives.

What has happened up to now has been that the focus of researchers has followed the relatively same assumption and made crucial aspect of the phenomena being ignored. The presumption that preceeds the researches has been that video games are a problem that is connected with addiction. This view forces researches of online game tend to ignore the social structure that has built up within the network of the online game world itself.

Because the focus has been only on addiction, research into online games has not really differentiated from researches into other addictions. The deductive tendency in defining this game addiction has become a social plain which takes place between players where they are joined together within the related technology – in that addiction is not the main problem but a surface symptom- and whereby it does not really get discussed.

As an investigation which aims to understand specific reasons which cannot be clouded by general ideas about addiction and the total immersion of players into video games online, this research will attempt to use a theoretical framework as well as an interpretive methodology which is oriented towards the interaction of the players in a specific social context.

This approach will make this research different from what other researches have made previously about addiction to online games. Based on literary research we have found 113 researches related to this issue of addiction to online games from 1983 until 2016. Of the 113 researches there were 68 researches made in a period of 11 years from 2005 to 2016 whereby only 13 of those researches used an interpretive

approach and 55 used an objective-positivist approach in the form of surveys, longitudinal studies, experiments and laboratory tests. From these interpretive researches only three researches utilized the key word ethnography.

This research attempts to fill in the unfilled spaces of other previous researches which still have the tendency to evaluate the effect of video games from a third person point of view. The conceptualization of these previous researches are already understood by the public. As a consequence, and what is often the case, is that a number of reserches draw the paralell of addiction to online game as being a phenomena that is the same as addiction to alcohol, gambling, pornography etc. This point of view is not totally incorrect but this point of view is risky because it ignores the dynamics occurring in the playing of online games which in fact give rise to the tendency for players to immerse themselves in them.

Another problem is that if from the outset we test the phenomena of online games as being a different form of addiction then the research will face the difficulty of having to reconstruct the social framework that has formed around this gaming world. What would happen would be that we cease to observe the symptoms, and the changes in context would not only appear but would also become valid, functional and become a type of normality in itself. As a result of the incentives available and the dynamics occurring between the players, the online games in fact cause the tendencies in a person to become immersed within a world form of its own which takes control of people and immerses them in into a situation of what is usually called *deep play* (Geertz, 1973). A player is involved in a work, struggle, fight, or fighting for a score – an insentive and dissentive dynamic - which, whether the player is aware or unaware of it, takes them away from being in touch with the main social reality and makes them a part of one big game with other players.

This research precisely discusses new facts that differ from other researches of the game world. Based on the researchers' investigation, the tendency of the research toward the game world and the players departs from the negative assumption that the game players are the ones with social problems. Researches in the world are hardwired to prove or fail to prove whether online gaming is making the game player addicted or not.

The researchers see the need for humanist and interpretive research to capture the natural phenomena of online game players. Researchers hope that with the ethnographic method, this research will provide a different illustration about the behavior and mentality of the game players in Indonesia. With this new description, the attempt to socially interfere with the online game players that are mostly labeled negative can be shifted. Positive images are expected to be able to provide recommendations to the government in order to create policies that will better embrace game players in Indonesia.

Some of the research in the world has also shown that playing online games has a positive impact on the players. However, the result has been obtained from attempting to refuse the main assumption that playing games is one of the mental diseases for the players. As a result, the complete image of the game world from the players' side has not been discovered yet.

The next research questions that should be covered by the other researchers are:

1. Are these findings also found in the online game players that do not play in the internet café, but play on their gadgets (mobile phones / iPad, etc.)?

2. Do these findings also happen to the online game players using the game consoles like Sony, Play station, or Xbox?

3. Are these findings also applied to the players outside 'Jabodetabek' area in Indonesia? The number of people in Jabodetabek is 12 million[2]. The total population of Indonesia is 262 million.

This research provides contribution to three aspects. First, this is the first study in Indonesia that is to appear in an international journal about online game world using interpretive approach with the ethnographic method. Second, the research provides a reference to the involvement

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[2]

http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2015/01/26/urban-expansion-in-east-asia-indonesia

of online games based on eastern cultural characters, especially Indonesia. Third, the research has uncovered the negative stigma that has always been closely associated to the game players in the community and the media.

However, this research has limitation in some aspects, i.e. limited resources so that it only researches the internet cafés and in 'Jabodetabek'. The research took three years and was diected towards 152 online gamers. However, not all of the players would interact with the researchers.

4.   THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

This research follows the symbolic interaction perspective. Instead of focusing on how social structure or social situation affects the behaviour of the individual, this perspective assumes that humans are active, creative and dynamic in attitudes, accept input, interpret it and take action (Charon, 1979; Mulyana, 2010), which in context of this research applies in performing *gaming online*. Each of the players considers the meaning of verbal and non-verbal symbols that are shown by their interactive partners and they modify their own behaviour based on their interpretation of those verbal and non-verbal symbols. The result of this backwards and forwards self-adjustment forms a cultural structure consisting of a set of norms which become the guidelines for other members in the communication with each other.

Humans do in fact have thought patterns that enable them to have control over how their behaviour manifests.Humans follow the process of thought evolution in trying to involve themselves in the experiences of others and then reflect upon the experience of others.

'The whole process is thus brought into the experience of the individuals involved in it; it is by such means, which enable the individual to take the attitude of the other toward himslef, that the individual is able consciously to adjust himself to that process, and to modify the resultant of that process in any given social act in terms of his adjustment to it. Reflexiveness, then, is the essential condition, within the social process, for the development of mind" (Mead, 1934 :134)

This theoretical perspective then inspires other theories which focus on the effects of the processes of interpreting symbols by the individual towards his environment.The theories show that the behaviour of the individual is influenced by classications that others make of him (Mead and Becker, 2013). The process of forming the personality of a person, especially of those considered to be deviations, are socially limitless when an individual is directed by an actor which surrounds his daily life. Disposition and self-awareness do not only appear because of prohibitions, punishments and socialization. The input of attitudes from other persons and situations normally influence how a person views, gives attributes to and identifies himself, for example in terms of being a person addicted to playing online games.

The labelling theory is a part of the symbolic interaction approach which is used to understand abnormal or criminal behaviour. This theory originates from the Sosiologist Horward S Becker (Brym, Lie, 2013) in connection with his study about the use of mariyuana as being an activity performed by a specific sub-culture but not as being a lifestyle choice. (Giddens et al., 2005).

Becker (KD, 2015) found that becoming a user of mariyuana was instigated by three aspects including acceptance of an individual into a group, close association through individual experience with other users, and the attitude of mariyuana users towards those who didn't use mariyuana. According to Becker, the abnormalities performed by a person or group was not a thing of character but in fact were a part of an individual or specific group and that the abnormality was the result of the process of interaction of those doing the abnormal thing with other individuals who did not go outside the norms.

According to Cicourel (in Brym, 2013 : 103), labelling has been practised for more than 40 years since the response to youthful misbehaviour.There is a tendency for labelling to be done by police towards children originating from homes with divorced parents,in that they must misbehave as youths. There is also a tendency to more severely punish children from broken homes compared with other children who misbehave but have come from families which are still united.In that context, the labeling has in itself fulfilled a process of *self-fulfilling*

prophecy, a concept from Cooley, which was used for the first time by Mead (Brym, 2013 : 104).

The theory of labelling is often used to express disdain for specific stereotyped practises of one group towards another group. The most common example of this can be found by the way an ethnic group is stigmatized by another group. Overseas for example, an understanding has developed that Jews are people who are categorized as being efficient in matters of economy.In Indonesia, this mark has also been placed on the people from Padang and the Chinese. It is uncertain that this labelling is correct but this classification has the power to shape the ways a person or group behave in line with their expectations from these particular ethnic groups.

Another example is the way that black skinned people in America are associated with the criminal world so that it is hard for them to find suitable work and so they often become involved in the world to which they have been associated.On the other hand, black skinned people have also become spurred on to become involved in the world of sport as a positive image alternative that they are able to show to other ethnic groups.

In the context of online gaming, labelling is quite commonly found. The labelling is done by one group to another and gives the result that each group plays their own individual part. In this context, the researcher assumes that a number of online gamers are not in fact addicts of online gaming.In spite of this their friends label these players as addicts, so that in the long run it becomes a reality that these players become addicts to online games.

Another perspective attached to the theory of labelling in the case of addicts to online game is that those who are of a certain class in an online game will be viewed as having certain characteristics associated with them. As an example, those from the upper middle class will be considered more likely to win an online game compared with a player from the lower class and who didn't go to school. This factor is important for the running of the online game.

The labeling that is associated with the online players as being people with no future and who only harm themselves every day. The media had a strategic role in socializing the label about online players in the eyes of the public.

'Symbolic interactionism suggests behavior is influenced by social groups by means of reflexive thought and social interactions rather than rational hedonistic calculus. Reflexive thought is how meanings of situations and scenarios can be defined by viewing and thinking about reactions from the viewpoint of others' (Kavish, 2016 : 13)

The orientation towards time also influences the attitude of a person and whether it will consolidate a label or not. In the case of online players the long term orientation of the opportunity for a person to become a champion and to receive economic insentive in the form of money from competition games together with the acceptance from the community as a respected person at online games will make players of online games establish the label of addict, which in the definition of the people outside the virtual community will be classed as a deviation.

5.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher has used an ethnographic approach to gain a complete picture from the point of view of the online players. According to Mulyana (2008) through ethnography a researcher will be able to get concepts, categories, patterns and models which come close to what the subjects of research experience feel and what is in their minds. In this context, theory is not the main factor but only a guide, a loose framework and does not become a tool with which to measure, to gather or conquer data. Qualitative data that the researcher attains overcomes the process and the real expertise of quantative data experts - the frequency and objective intensity – measured mathematically.

Efforts to capture the true sense of the virtual community is not easy as was stated by Hollan (in Mulyana, 2008 : 17), because the qualitative researcher is faced with the complexity of the relationship between open behaviour and the experiences felt by the research subjects. Because of this Hollan recommended that besides making behavioural observations of what happens in social context and on other cultural plains the researcher must actively delve into the thoughts and experiences of the research subjects through their comments.

This research uses the qualitative method based on interpretive perspective. Have (2007) who emphasized that while quantitative research was oriented to process all types of collected data into figures and oriented towards testing a hypothesis, qualitative research was an effort to discover the sense and to get a complex description of a phenomena as a total entity.

This research, which begins by using this qualitative method whereby experts conceptualize social conditions taking place from afar, will try to understand how the members build a sense of community as well as weave a social life with each other. This methodology assumes that the actions, habits, situation, context and norms- as well as a variety of other social expressions – which before had seemed strange and without significance to us becomes acceptable and sensible.

The qualitative method makes it possible for the researcher to understand the function, benefit and the rationality of everything the subjects do, and in order to do so the researcher needs to understand how the participants act out and go on with their lives (Babbie, 2008). In order to gain a complete understanding of how online video game addiction occurs the researcher is of the opinion that ethnography is the right method of approach. Ethnography relies on participant observation from which the researcher hopes to able to capture the ecosystem and involvement of these game players.

Total mapping of the lifestyle of online players has to begin with fragments of their personal experiences which then become woven to form the greater context of the lives of online players. The researcher has got amongst them to observe and interact directly with the online game players to discover the significance of this lifestyle from their point of view as players.

Through ethnography the researcher attained an understanding of addiction to online gaming from the point of view of the people who experienced in it firsthand. As well as this, ethnography made it possible to form a view of online game addiction and categorize it as being a social phenomena, not just as some kind of psychological problem. The researcher agrees with Wolcott (1973) who said that the method is not just a way to acquire data but also very much a defining factor towards the abstract theory that is developed.

Compared with other methods participative research has extra value of its own when capturing the activities of the actors in their natural background.The research presents in a systematic way how the participants live out, experience and build their social world. The researcher did not try to appraise the important points or the actions of the players from an outside point of view but rather let it take shape its own level of significance woven into the flow of activities performed by the players (Brewer 2000:6). With this emperical and scientific situation, the researcher used an ethnographic hybrid approach that was a mixture of virtual ethnography and traditional ethnography of the real world.

6.   RESEARCH FINDINGS

6.1 Explaining the Profile of Online Game Players in Jabodetabek Internet cafes

The research into the behaviour of players of online games conducted by the researcher took place over approximately three years.The research, which began with began with pre-research collection of preliminary data about online players took place from October 2014 to September 2017. The total number of internet cafe users met was 175 and of these only 152 of them were online players.

Most of the players in fact chose the Warnet (Internet Cafe) as their second home and even as their first home outside their home with their immediate family, then came school as their next place they liked to be. From the four methods used to dig up data in the field which included interviews, observation, active participation and group discussion, the observation and active participation dominated the research process. Through these two approaches the researcher was able to collect a range of data and grasp the significance, both above and below the surface, to these players of online games.

Only after two years of research could the differences amongst the players really be found. At first players of online games at the five internet cafes seemed to play online games for the same amount of time. The patterns of their activities were also not very different. It was only when the researcher started to stay in the areas and to make participative observation by staying in the internet cafes several days a week a few real differences between one player and

another began to appear.

The first impression that the researcher had was that most of the players spent their time at school and then the warnet.They consisted of the class of kids who generally have positive behaviour. Almost all the online game players were school kids and did not have bad records in terms of behaviour at school, in society or at home. They were categorized as school or university students capable of acting in the way that was expected of them by their schools and homes, meaning they were not aggressive, followed the norms and regulations expected of them in their schools and homes.They were never involved in fights between schools, did not use drugs or drink alcohol, were not involved in dangerous sexual behaviour such as being intimate with the opposite sex (having sex outside marriage) or same sex (homosexuality). Of the different types of public fears about modern youthful behaviour the researcher saw no sign them in the research informants. It was their healthy behaviour that lay behind the players being able to have permission from their parents to be at the Warnet.

As we are often informed in the media for example, there are an increasing number of conflicts between school and university students which have become types of youthful misbehaviour that frighten parents and schools. From year to year this problem continues to haunt the public. Data shows that in 2010 there were 128 cases of fighting between junior and senior highschools. The following year the number increased over 100% to 330 cases and even claimed the lives of 82 students. In 2012 there were 139 cases which again claimed the lives of a further 12 students.

Of the online players observed and then later interviewed, almost all of the 152 had never been involved in fights between school and university students. They had measured timetables. Coming home from school they would choose to go home or play online games in the warnet. Other naughty youthful behaviour which often makes the public panic is the use of narcotics and other drugs and also the drinking of alcohol. This kind of misbehaviour is really worrying as it tends to lead to criminality – criminal theft, robbery, rape and even the taking of life.

From the observations and interviews of the 152

online players who became the subjects of the research, not one of these online game players had become involved in dangerous activities such as using narcotics, other drugs or alcohol. Most of them did in fact smoke cigarettes but based on the interviews of all players none admitted to having consumed dangerous or illegal substances. They said that they had never come across game players who consumed narcotics, other drugs or drank alcohol.

According to them, any player who was serious about achieving prestige at playing online games, whether it be as just a player or as a professional player, would not do drugs. Almost all had never taken drugs or drunk alcohol and said that players needed a high level of concentration in order to be able to play optimally. Using drugs or drinking alcohol would make players feel unable to focus in order to improve their game performance. Besides this the online players felt sure that if they consumed drugs or alcohol that the relationships with other online players and their own teams would become strained. There was a player who was already working and who once drank a beer in a warnet but this type of thing rarely occurs based on the observation of the researcher and from what the informants said.

With low awareness resulting from the consumption of illegal substances the players felt sure that they would become a burden for their team in playing online games. Within a team the players are expected to work together in a solid team. Even though they had information that there were types of drugs that would help them to stay awake and remain energetic and would make it possible for them to play all night, the possibilities did not tempt the online game players to use narcotics and alcohol as an alternative method of strengthening their bodies to play online games.

Based on the research findings, the players of online games are prevented from the temptations of narcotics because of the social interaction factor created amongst the online game players themselves.The incentives of friendship and solidarity have made the players of online games feel like they have a second home when playing playing online games with others. The players become motivated to behave in line with the hopes of the *significant others* within the online player environment by having feelings of

solidarity, discipline, focus and mutualistic empathy with the other online game players.

It's the incentives from outside the player that then become a firewall for the players to protect them from influences – real negative life influences. Incentives are usually gained after a person makes certain moves. In the context of playing online games, the incentive for the player is the process of forming affiliations together with other online game players which then provides the satifaction for the individual player. This affiliation incentive is gained when an individual is prepared to share difficulties and good times with other players.

> "Yeah Maam, as far as we know there aren't any of the kids who use those things. We don't enjoy playing with those who do. The kid is sure not to be fun to play with. After using that he won't be able to concentrate. When we want to compete we have to agree to practise. Anybody who's lazy we won't invite. Better to find someone else. And from the start we make it clear that they have to be on time and not lazy about practisin *(Informant MN)[3]*

> "Once we have a team it's really good. We are always together. Whether we have something to eat or not. Or whether we have to beg for it, we always have a good time. Though sometimes we have our bad moments too. But when we're all together we don't think about it." *(Informant AR)[4]*

According to the comments of the research subjects they all knew about playing online games in the warnet from friends' invitations. The lively atmosphere of the warnet, with the noisy activity of the players in front of their gaming screens and the atmosphere surrounding the online games it becomes an attraction all on its own to the beginner. There were a few players who had been attracted to the impressive atmosphere of the warnet because of seeing so many people being able to play together. Other players felt they had a second home at the warnet where they did not feel alone and lonely.

> "I still remember clearly the time when my friends and I were on our way home from school we would often go to Cupid Net (located near the intersection of mirota kampus Kaliurang, Yogyakarta) We'd take the A3 bus route. I played the game Red Alert and for the first time I was introduced the LAN system where several persons could play together online as long as they were on the same modem network. My personal impression at that time ? This is amazing I can play together, at the same time, fighting the same enemies – you have to understand that playing games with internet connection was not yet popular – if I'm not mistaken one of the games with internet connection that was played by adults was something like Nexia Kingdom.*"[5]*

The ties with other friends who play games (*peer enggagement*) becomes the first drawcard that makes an individual get involved in the world of online games. As a result of this interaction involving a series of verbal and non-verbal symbols a community is created with its own set of norms that have to be followed even though these are unwritten.   This harmonious community is in line with the collective cultural values common in Indonesia, as Hofstede[6] stated. Based on observations, active participation and in depth interviews that the researcher made, the character of the online games player community is marked by the the following themes:

6.1.1 Personal Identity Drowned Inside The Group Identity

The behaviour of online players whether the in group in the online games or from the out group community, the online player being outside the game, all showed indications of having a sense of community. Individuals players will follow the behaviour that has been agreed upon by the online game community. It explains why there wasn't an online player using narcotics, drugs or alcohol - the whole of the gaming community doesn't use them.

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[3] Informant MN interviewed in June 2015
[4] Informant ART interviewed in July 2016

[5] Informant ALY interviewed in February 2016
[6] The researcher applied Hosftede's approach as put forward
   by Gudykunst (2003), Lustig (2010), and Jandt (2013).

"Heck, how could we accept it, and how would we be invited. There's no way we'd be invited. Everybody is clean. At most they smoke cigarettes. I didn't use to smoke. Then when they were smoking I'd often get offered – ya in the end I just followed*."[7]*

The importance of the online game community supercedes the importance of the individual as a member of the community. Every individual will always put the needs, wishes and hopes of the collective online game community to which he or she belongs.

"If I have a test or something to do with my girlfriend I choose to practise. The problem is I wouldn't feel right, everyone else keeps their promises. How could I be the only one that didn't practise. Even though they'd only complain. Ya, I could say I had to to do homework or something. After a while they'd calm down*."[8]*

An individual online player's identity will melt away within the online game community. As an illustration an individual online game player no longer has the identity A but becomes A Nexian (the online game community name).

"Because we always play together and compete together I become known by my nickname which is also my gang's nickname."[9]

Even though the online games are meant to make competition and to provide economic profit for the players, in the context of the online game community members of the community place importance on the relationship between players compared with the target of conquering the opposition in a competitive online game world.

"We never think about winning or losing. Yeah we like to win but if we lose it doesn't matter. We just try again. The best part is the togetherness. The

preparation. The staying out late. *"[10]*

Members of the online game community put the group spirit foremost before the individual.(The 'Us' not 'Me' perspective). Based on the researcher's observations, the online players who have joined together as a team always do things together. When one of the players wants to take a longer break for example, the other players will do the same. Another interesting observation is that the players always share their needs and equipment together. They don't only share money to buy food together but they share vehicles, computer equipment and other things.

6.1.2 Reflections On Social Cohesion

Individual players of online games and other players within an online game community have strong social ties. Every individual online player pays attention to, protects and takes care of their fellow community online players, just like within a family.

"If there's something – I also have to worry about it. If one of the members has a problem with family or school, I also have to know the inside story. If I don't it becomes another problem. The playing is off. If we know the problem it's good, we can usaually help each other."[11]

Activities between individual members of the online game community are run in a family way. The warmth between them is not only apparent when they're together as a group during a game (*in group*), but also when they're amongst the wider online (*out group*), and when with other online game groups and not playing online games (*offline*).

"The nice thing about playing games, especially if we have a boss and can take part in competitions, is that we get to meet a lot of friends from everywhere. If I go some area and run out of money all I have to do is contact them. In a short space of time they'll turn up. One time I was provided with a hotel room with free food. So if in the

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[7] Informant RGA interviewed in April 2015
[8] Informant PP interviewed in September 2014
[9] Informant JG interviewed in November 2015

[10] Informant RD interviewed in May 2015
[11] Informant KAP interviewed in May 2016

past we were only friends with those in our own group now it's between teams and even districts and all safe. It's great we don't have to feel alone wherever we go.*"12*

A community will accompany members of another online game community and provide supplies, skills, directions safety and responsibility to all members.

"At the warnet it's like being in your own home. Everyone cares about each other. If I don't have food, we all eat together. When I have something yeah we share that too. If someone has a problem at school we help each other. We make lists to cheat on tests together too.*"13*

For those online players who become online game community players, keeping the peace and harmony becomes a priority of the social relations they build.

"Once there was one person who wasn't suited to the group. We didn't feel ok wih this kid. He didn't seem right. In the end we got together Then we told him all together that it seemed like we couldn't get along with him any more."14

6.1.3 Cultural Paradox

Even though according to Hofstede the communication that goes on between members of a community in Asia is predominantly *high context*, in the community of online players in this study what is found is *low-context* communication. This difference occurs because the digital ecosystem has a highly democratic culture. Every member inside the community has the same position. The kind of communication they hope for is to the point, quick and compact. This condition becomes one of the paradoxes and also a clear identifying factor of the online game community with its communl cultural values orientation and other communities. The egalitarian philosophy within the digital world

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[12] Informant IGP interviewed in July 2015
[13] Informan SP interviewed in Oktober 2015
[14] Informan AHY interviewed in January 2016

doesn't cause the players of games at the warnet to put individualism to the fore. They remain online players with an Eastern society character that's communal.

In the culture of the online game community providing input in front of others is possible, if the input is introduced by the group leader. In other communal communities that sort of thing is not considered correct. So that in the online game community any member of game community may takes the initiative.

Even though a section of the people see the members of the online game community as individuals who have no ethics and rules, that stigma is no longer valid with regard to the online games community. Even the sellers of drinks and food operating around the warnets don't stigmatize the online players in the warnte. This is the reason why they stated that the online players didn't have any of the socially disturbing habits as they are stigmatized by the society.

The behaviour of mutual respect, equal rights and politeness exists between them. These moral values then become a creed which is followed by the members of the online game community. In the online game community its members have a time orientation which has a character of being polychronic. They see time as going round in a repetitive cycle. Notwithstanding, there is a paradox within the online game community that the researcher found. It is that there is a type of player who in fact has a monochronic character and sees time in linear form, as if it is a straight line, based on an exact measuring so that no time is wasted. They see time as something of great value. Yet, these online players who take part in competitions and experience losing have a kind of carefree attitude in accepting defeat. They believe that there will always be another chance to become the champion. This is of course in line with the sense of community with the polychronic cultural time value.

Based on the observations and result of interviews we found that some of the players of online games who became the subject of this research had no girlfriends. But some of these players who had partners admitted that they spent more time at the internet cafe. In a number of case playing online games became the way for an individual to break away from doing mischief.

"I was bad when I was in highschool, I got into weird circles, drugs etc. Then there was extracurricular Theater activity which took up a lot of time and caused me to be coming home late. I once became the leader of a gang at school.You have to understand my highschool was known for getting into street fights The moment when I woke up to myself was after a friend became unable to use his right hand for writing, like he'd had a stroke. That was when my friend was slashed with a short sword and the nerves in his arm were severed. If I had been in his position – how would I have felt. Maybe it would have been better to just die, and there'd be nothing else to worry about.Bu if crippled ?How'd my future be ? These type of thoughts kept haunting me. decided to leave the gang – but it wasn't without heavy consequences and caused me to return to playing games as an escape."[15]

Playing games becomes a way of release for online players who have unchannelled energy. In life, when a person is unable to express his or her apprehension and cannot keep it under control all the time, he or she must make efforts to channel emotions from memories or activities in the past.

The mischief made by children and youths becomes an important record for parents at home as well as at school, including things like stealing, robbery and killing. However based on the results of the observations and the interviews none of the interviewees had criminal records.They also admitted having never considered doing anything criminal such as stealing to find capital for playing games.

6.1.4 Comforming Socially

Individuals who become members of online game communities will always follow the directions and instructions of the leader in their online game community.

"I usually just play the attacker when I'm playing. I just wait for the direction from the boss. The problem is that I get confused if I have to lead. It's better to just follow. If we lose no

one blames me, I hate to be blamed."[16]

The players in an online games community whether in an *in group* or *out group* situation always respect the hierachy within the community. Naturally the leader of the community is not sworn in in some special ceremony and doesn't sign some sort of contract as leader that's filled with privileges and responsibilities for as long as he leads the community. But even without any formal agreement there is a consensus that community members will obey the individual who has become *leader* of that online game community.

"We usually just know who is the leader. Its the one we most respect. The one who is capable of unifying us. The eldest one. Not meaning in age. The most patient one. The one everyone listens to."[17]

The above mentioned findings are empirical facts that differ with the findings of previous researches by researchers from Europe, Asia Pacific and America who were focused on finding and confirming patterns of behaviour. From this research we have acquired findings of a cultural nature in forming the behaviour of online game players. Premises, some of which were globally stigmatic in nature towards the cultural context of the lives of online games players were not completely valid, specifically with regard to the culture of online players from Jabodetabek (Jakarta and its neighbouring cities of Bogor, Depok, Tangerang and Bekasi) in Indonesia.

7. DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

The findings caused the researcher to make a comparison between the stigma that has been going around in the public sector and also in the scientific world with regard to online players. These include:[18],[19]:

- That playing online games causes a number of deviant actions such as

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[15] Informant DH interviewed in March 2015

[16] Informant AYP interviewed in October 2014
[17] Informant IUM interviewed in April 2016
[18]
http://techno.okezone.com/read/2016/08/09/207/1459259/dampak-kecanduan-game-online-dari-kacamata-psikolog diakses pada Desember 2016
[19] http://tekno.liputan6.com/read/453922/dampak-buruk-main-game-bagi-kesehatan diakses pada Desember 2016

criminal actions to steal money in order to play games, sexual behaviour that is out of control inside the warnet and anti-social behaviour like becoming isolated and alienated.

- Playing online games made players spend time only for playing games so that it disrupted the importance of school, work and social life in the real world. This is the stigma which formed the reputation that online games were the same as gambling because both have the characteristic of being addictive.

- The players of online games were labelled as suffering from accute depression; loss of self esteem, had withdrawn themselves from interpersonal communication with others and were suffering from physical ailments due to bad eating, sleep and physical exercise routines.

All the stigmas applied to the online players came down to labels being applied to them as being : "anti social, Internet Cafe Beggars, Having a dim future, and Being unethical". Our research findings are far from such stigmatic labels. Generally speaking all online players that the researcher found had the following characteristics:

- The online players have good time management skills. Most of them began to play games at the end of the week going from Friday afternoon through to Sunday afternoon. On Saturday mornings some of the players returned home to spend time with their families. The activities that they went to take part in included taking part in domestic activities such as birthdays, weddings, family gatherings and others.

- They have good ethics in the social relations with other online players. Any aggressive behaviour shown by the game players occurred while they were playing online games whereby they would shout words between themselves within the framework of the virtual world. In the virtual space the players stuck to the rules designed by the games' producers. The online game ecosystem that has been created as a global soscialization space causes the players to conform to the international rules of online games. Expressions of happiness, nervousness, fear and panic are allowed to be uttered as long as the players use the words to build up the motivation of their fellow teams. Arrogant utterances and efforts to put psychological pressure by players are not possible. If a player does something which breaks the rules of online gaming they will receive a number of punishments or be barred from the game.

- They have a sensitivity outside of the online game environment. When the players of online games are in the warnet they seem totally immersed in the virtual world. But when the game is over the players had an awareness of the environment around them. The players were still able to communicate clearly, politely and were friendly with other visitors, or even with the food sellers around the warnet. The findings of this research differ from the myths that the public has been believing about the behaviour of online game players. The players have been able to open up and show acceptable social behaviour.

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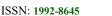*Sociology. Pop Culture to Social Culture.3rd Edition*. Canada : Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

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