

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT, FU JEN CATHOLIC DEPARTMENT

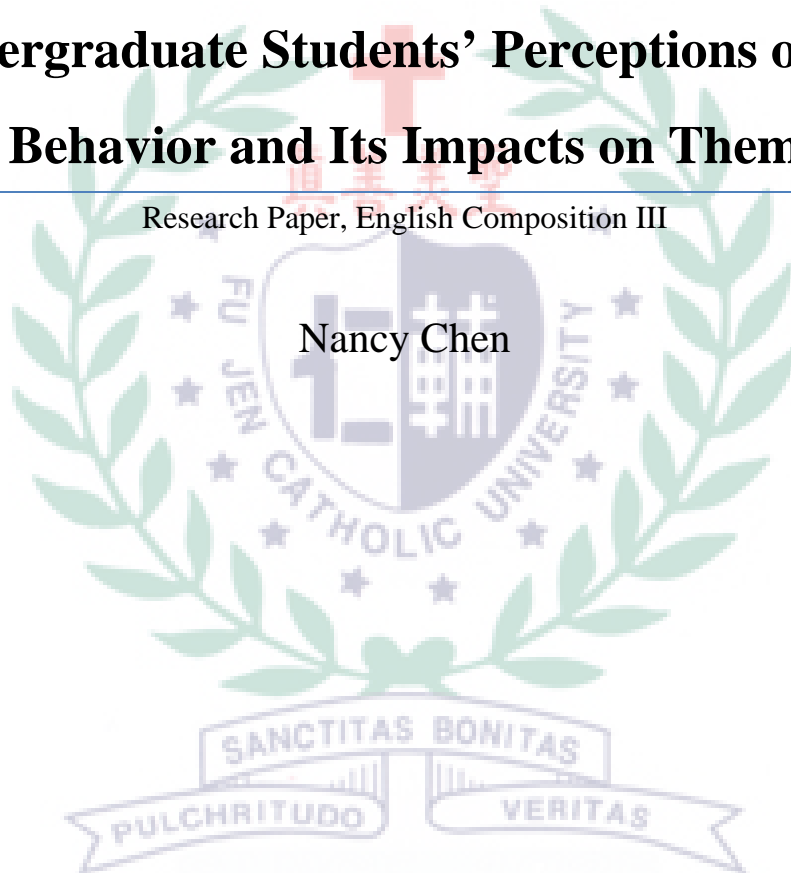
GRADUATION PROJECT 2016

# **Playing Games on Smartphones: Taiwanese Undergraduate Students' Perceptions on the Behavior and Its Impacts on Them**

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Research Paper, English Composition III

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Research Paper 3

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Playing Games on Smartphones: Taiwanese Undergraduate Students' Perceptions on the  
Behavior and Its Impacts on Them

As time goes on, almost every electronic product in life has improved. Modern technology, including televisions, computers, tablets, and of course, smartphones, have all gotten to a new level. One significant use of these “machines” is to play games. As technology grows more and more advanced, people are not only limited to playing games at home, but now, due to smartphones, they are able to pick up their smartphone to play games whenever they feel like it. According to a report by Neilson, in 2011, the average mobile gamer plays an average of 7.8 hours a month, and the amount of time spent on mobile gaming is growing rapidly. In this study, the researcher investigated the impacts of Taiwanese undergraduate students' behaviors of playing games on smartphone.

As stated by a study done by Nielsen, gamers are spending more and more time playing games on different kinds of platforms. In 2011, U.S. game-players aged 13 and over spent 5.1 hours a week playing games on any platforms. In 2013, the hours of gaming increased to six hours a week. Also, the devices gamers play on are diversifying. 50 percent say that they also play games on phones or tablets, which is a 35 percent growth from 2011. Another research in 2010 done by “Marketing Charts,” shows that 24 percent of people under the age of 25 play smartphone games daily, and the percentage is sure to have increased in the following years. In another research also done by Nielsen, games are the most popular app category. Among all the apps downloaded in the past 30 days, 64 percent are games, while in contrast, only 39 percent are news apps,

and even a lower 11 percent are education-related apps. This shows that people are actually spending quite some time gaming on their mobile devices, and that a large number of people carry game applications in their devices.

In Taiwan, the issue of playing games on electronic products is quite significant. A 2013 study, “The Observation of the Impacts on Daily Lives of Smartphone and Online Games on Teenagers,” was conducted by an organization called “The Society for Truth and Light” to observe how smartphone and internet gaming impact teenagers aging from eleven years old to twenty-four years old. The findings show that 5% of young people actually spend 9 hours playing online video games and smartphone games. According to the study, this impacts teenagers in many ways, including their social lives, family relationship, academic performances, and health. Many of them tend to use recess as well as class time, or even sacrifice their sleep to play games. Now, due to smartphones, partial indulgence in games can become indulgence at all times, and the impacts of game playing may have a greater impact than before.

For people, there are various reasons for smartphone game playing. As it is stated by Hark Shin Kim, “people who want to escape from stress or responsibilities, who are interested in interacting with friends and learning about the personalities of others, and who have emotional stimulation from fast action games with high quality visuals prefer to play games” (An Examination Of Personality Factors, Motivations, And Outcomes Associated With Smartphone Gaming). People tend to view playing smartphone games as a positive activity. In Taiwan, 49.74 percent of teenagers think that smartphone games help their mental and physical reactions, 41.01 percent believe they test their intelligence, and 39.15 percent consider them helpful in training their cooperation with others (“The Observation of the Impacts”). As it is shown, many people think that many benefits will follow by playing smartphone games.

Several studies have been done to observe how using smartphones affect people in

various ways; however, very few have been done to examine how smartphone games affect people. The researcher sees the importance of narrowing down the focus on the use of smartphones to playing games on smartphones, and then closely examined its impacts on undergraduate students, who are at the critical time of getting ready to enter the workforce. This study is believed to benefit undergraduate students, university instructors, as well as family and friends. Students will be able to understand the effects of spending too much time on smartphone games and may help them think twice whether they want to continue the current situation. Instructors will benefit from gaining an understanding of the students' use of smartphones in the classroom. Also, family and friends may understand more about the playing of smartphone games and can understand better how to interact with these college students.

The researcher discovered that there is a need to examine whether the problem of spending too much time on smartphone games really has an impact on people, especially college students, for there are no similar studies done in the past. Therefore, a study was conducted to look into how playing games on smartphones impact Taiwanese undergraduate students, mainly in four different aspects: their relationship with friends, relationship with family members, academic performance, and their health. Also, their perceptions on smartphone game playing were also investigated.

The research questions are:

1. How much time do Taiwanese undergraduates spend on smartphone games?
2. What are the impacts of Taiwanese undergraduate students playing smartphone games?
  - A. How does it affect their family life?
  - B. How does it affect their social life?
  - C. How does it affect their academic performance?
  - D. How does it affect their health?

3. What are the students' perceptions on playing smartphone games?

The study took place in northern Taiwan, and the participants were college students in northern Taiwan. The researcher used online surveys to collect data. Also, interviews were conducted for more in-depth responses. Five college students who filled out the survey (by random) were interviewed based on random selection. The researcher used snowball sampling for online surveys. Stratified sampling was used for the interviews. The researcher invited volunteers to be the interviewees.

112 valid survey responses and five responses from the interviewees were collected. After data analysis, the researcher found the following results.

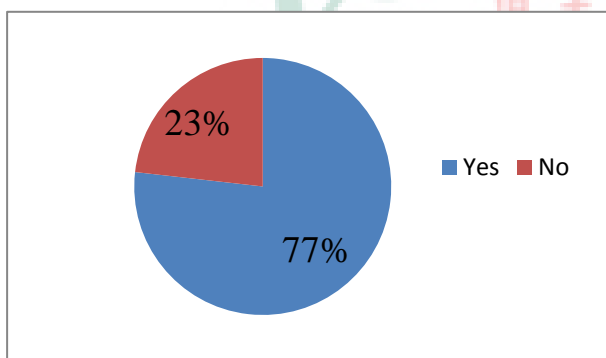


Fig.1 Do you play with smartphone games?

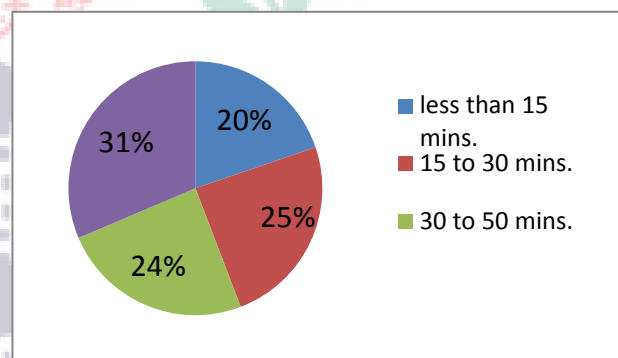


Fig.2 How much time do you spend on smartphone games per day?

Fig. 1 shows that 77% of the respondents play games with their smartphones. Fig. 2 shows that 31% of the participants, the highest proportion, spend more than 50 minutes a day playing games on their smartphones.

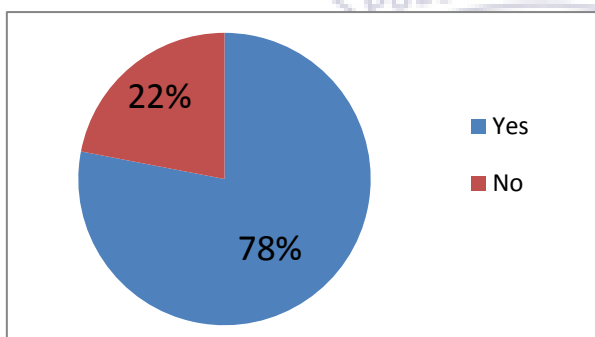


Fig. 3 Do you play at your family's presence?

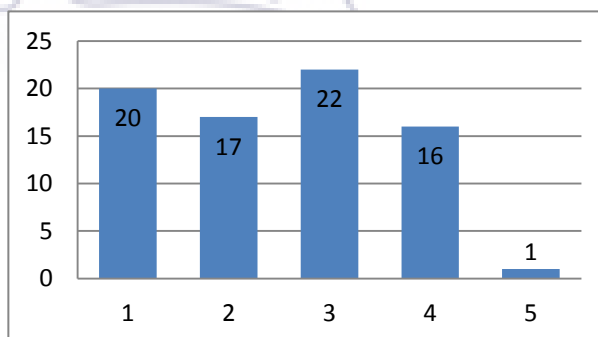


Fig. 4 How much impact do you think there is on the relationship with your family of your playing with smartphone games? (1→No impact, 5→Highly impacted)

Fig. 3 indicates that 78% of the participants that play smartphone games play at their family members' presence. Fig. 4 points out that most people think there is not a lot of impact on the relationship with their family when they play games in their family members' presence. Most participants who think they are impacted or highly impacted say that the interactions with their family members decreased and that the interaction and atmosphere among family members seem a little more indifferent than it should. The first response below shows the interviewee's neutral attitudes while the second response shows that playing games on smartphone brought a positive impact to the family relationship:

- Everyone in the family plays with their smartphones, so it does not make a difference.
- The relationship actually becomes better because everyone plays the games and discusses the strategies of the games together.

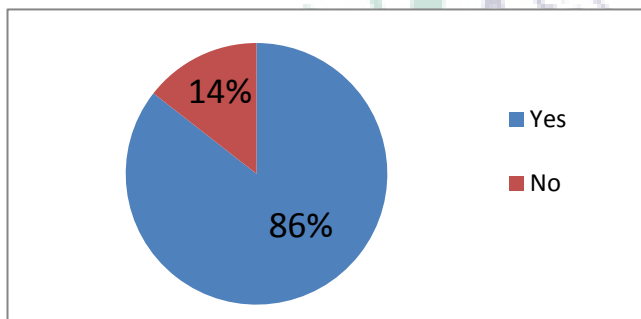


Fig. 5 Do you play smartphone games at your friends' presence?

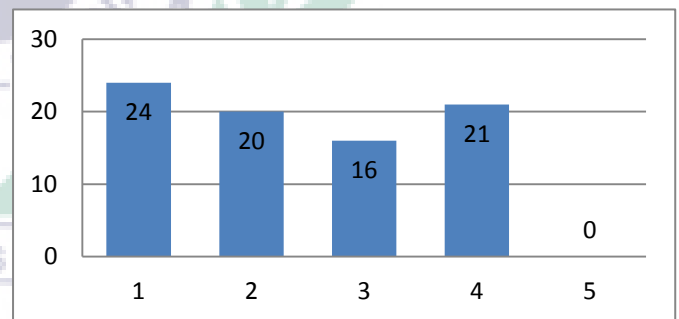


Fig. 6 How much impact do you think there is on the relationship with your friends of your playing with smartphone games? (1→No impact, 5→Highly impacted)

Fig. 5 shows that 86% of the participants play smartphone games in the presence of their friends. Fig. 6 indicates that most participants think that playing smartphone games in their friends' presence does not have much impact on the relationships with them. For the participants who think not much is impacted, they claim that their friends are also swiping their phones, or that their relationships with their friends in fact become better because they play the same games and can talk about the games they play together.

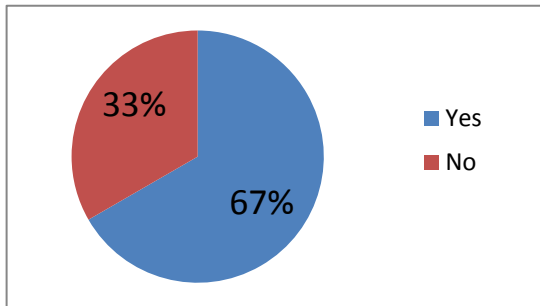


Fig. 7 Do you play smartphone games during lectures?

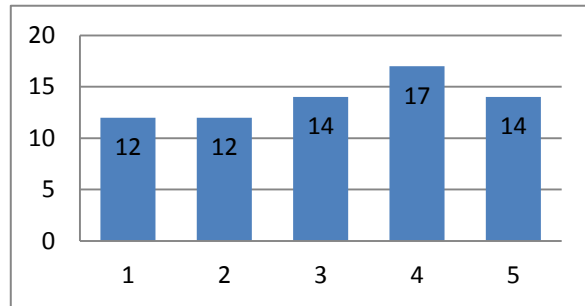


Fig. 8 How much impact do you think there is on your academic performances of your playing with smartphone games? (1→No impact, 5→Highly impacted)

In Fig. 7, when participants were asked about whether they play games with their smartphones during lectures, 67% responded they do. Fig. 8 points out that a slightly larger number of participants think playing smartphone games in class have an impact on their academic performances. A few examples of how the participants think are impacted are listed below:

- I might miss some important points the professor addresses.
- I have difficulty paying attention in class.
- I have a harder time studying or reviewing for the tests.

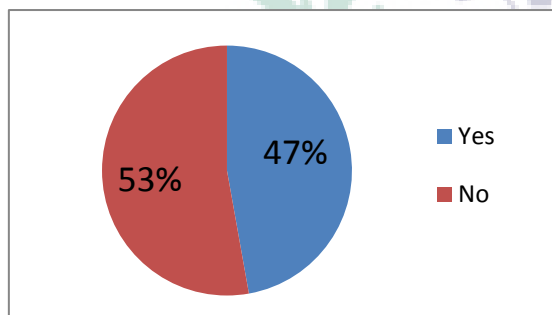


Fig. 9 Do you think your eyesight is impacted by playing smartphone games?

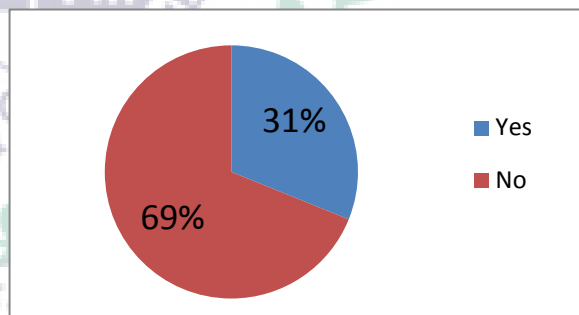


Fig. 10 Do you think your general health is impacted by playing smartphone games?

Fig. 9 and Fig. 10 show that most of the participants claim that both their eyesight and general health are not affected by playing smartphone games. The health issues that some participants claim to suffer from include poorer eyesight, dizziness, headaches, sore necks and shoulders, and also a sore thumb, but most participants do not consider these symptoms as getting unhealthier.

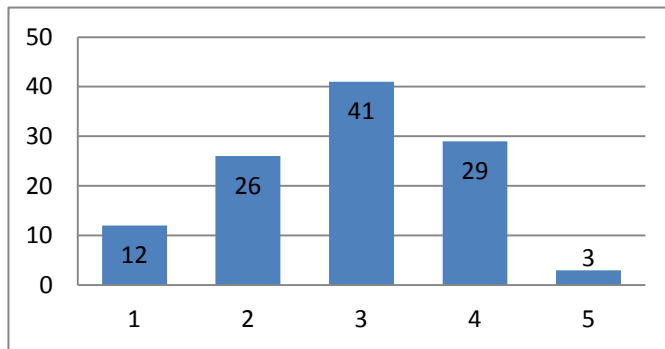


Fig. 11 How beneficial do you think playing smartphone games is? (1→Definitely not beneficial, 5→Definitely beneficial)

Fig. 11 shows that most participants hold a neutral perception on the benefits of playing with smartphone games. However, some participants are able to find benefits from playing smartphone games. A few examples are given below:

- Time killer.
- A good way to relax when I feel stressed.
- I learned a lot from some smartphone games, for instance, QuiThink (a game that tests on knowledge from different fields).

From the findings, the researcher discovered that most Taiwanese undergraduate students play games on their smartphones, and that among the participants that play smartphone games, 31% actually spend more than 50 minutes a day playing games on their smartphones. One interviewee who plays smartphone games more than two hours a day said that he uses every moment he can to play games on his phone, including waiting for the bus, taking the MRT, and before he goes to sleep. Another interviewee admits that he is highly addicted to smartphone games, and he plays whenever he can, including during class time, and even sacrifices his sleep to play games. This shows that many undergraduates in Taiwan are spending a lot of time playing games on smartphones.

However, most undergraduates think that spending time on playing smartphones do not have a significant impact on the relationships with family and friends. Most participants play with their smartphones at their family and friends' presence, but they do not think they are less intimate with them. A possible reason is that most people



nowadays are also used to the use of technological products and often use them as well. One interviewee said that all her family members enjoy using smartphones. Even when they are sitting together in the living room, they can still talk with each other while looking at their phones. She also states that everyone in her family plays the same game (Candy Crush) and they help each other when they encounter difficult stages, and this boosts their relationship with one another; thus, she considers the impact beneficial. Another interviewee states that a lot of times when he goes out with his friends, one activity they enjoy doing together is play smartphone games and discuss the strategies of the game. These show that most undergraduates think smartphone games can actually boost the relationship among family and friends in some ways.

However, most people agree that playing smartphone games in class impacts their academic performances. Most of them responded that they often miss the important points that the professor makes in class, and they would have to seek for help from other classmates afterwards. Some participants claim that playing smartphone games in class helps them to stay awake or keep focused in class. However, an interviewee states that it is very hard to focus on what the professor is saying on stage while playing games. He finds it difficult to play games and listen to the lecture simultaneously, and most of the time, his attention will eventually fall entirely on the games rather than the lecture. Missing important points resulting from the distraction from lectures to smartphone games lead to other problems, which ultimately result in poorer academic performance. Even though the disadvantages are more than the advantages, students still tend to play games on their smartphones during lectures.

In terms of health, most participants do not feel a significant change. Many people think getting poorer eyesight cannot be completely blamed on smartphone games, but also computers and books as well. Most participants responded that they do not feel they are getting “unhealthy”; however, whenever they stay up late playing smartphone

games, they can feel an obvious tiredness, but as an interviewee responded, she does not consider feeling tired as becoming unhealthy. Most symptoms the participants find are dry and tired eyes, and sometimes a sore neck or sore shoulders. Other than that, they do not feel less healthy than before.

Overall, the participants mainly hold a neutral perception on the benefits of playing games on smartphone games. They do not think smartphone games bring definite advantages, but they can still find several benefits from playing smartphone games. A possible explanation may be that undergraduates in Taiwan on one hand find benefits in smartphone games mainly in the mental aspect, like relaxation or excitement, but on the other hand, they think smartphone games distract them from the more important business they should do.

In conclusion, according to this study, a high percentage of undergraduates in northern Taiwan play smartphone games and spend a lot of time on the games. However, they do not think this behavior has a serious impact on either their family relationships or social life. Also, the general participants feel that their health is not affected by playing smartphone games as well. However, most agree that playing smartphone games during lectures can bring serious impacts to their academic performances. Therefore, according to this study, classroom rules on using smartphones should be established and strictly followed. Undergraduate students hold a neutral view on smartphone games. They understand that spending too much time on them can be harmful, but it is deniable that smartphone games can also bring them positive effects. Hence, the time and place of playing of smartphone should be carefully considered.

Appendix  
(Survey Questions)

Basic Information

1. Gender
  - A. Male
  - B. Female
  
2. Location of your school
  - A. Northern Taiwan
  - B. Central Taiwan
  - C. Southern Taiwan
  - D. Eastern Taiwan
  - E. Island regions
  - F. Others
  
3. What grade are you in?
  - A. Freshmen
  - B. Sophomore
  - C. Junior
  - D. Senior

Information on the usage of smartphone games

1. Do you play games on your smartphone?
 

Yes

No, please go directly to question 13
  
2. How much time do you spend on smartphone games a day?
 

Under 15 minutes

15-30 minutes

30-50 minutes

50 minutes and above
  
3. How many games do you have in your smartphone? Please list out three of your most played games.
  
4. Do you play smartphone games while in your family's presence?
 

Yes

No, please move on to question 6

5. How much impact do you think there is on the relationship with your family of your playing of smartphone games? (1→No impact, 5→Highly impacted)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

6. Do you play smartphone games while in your friends' presence?

Yes

No, please move on to question 8

7. How much impact do you think there is on the relationship with your friends of your playing of smartphone games? (1→No impact, 5→Highly impacted)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

8. Do you play smartphone games during class time?

Yes

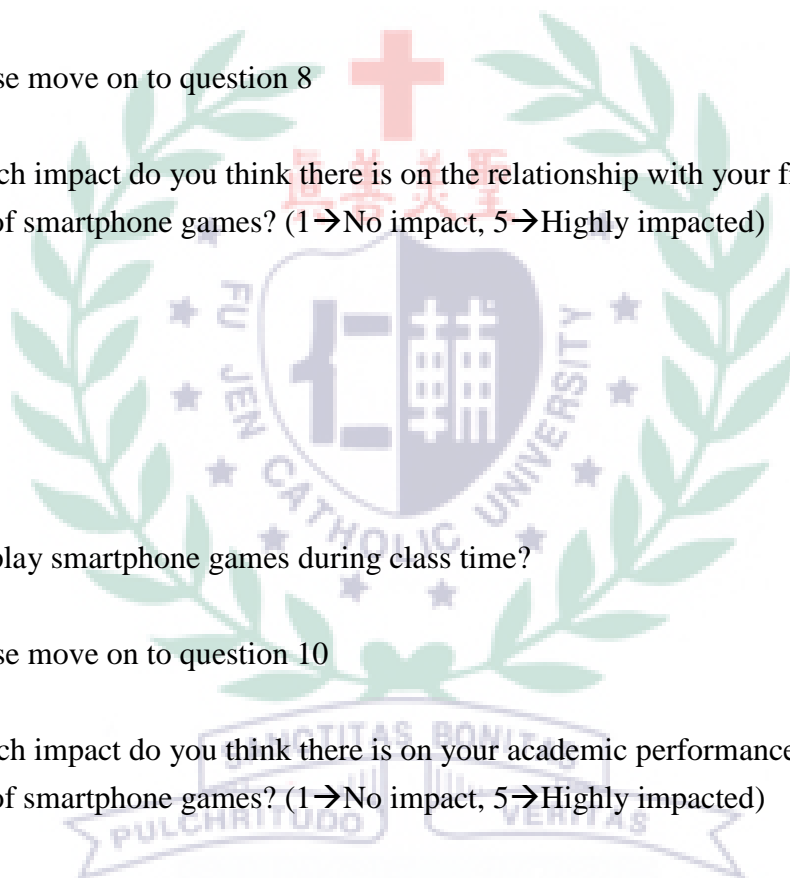
No, please move on to question 10

9. How much impact do you think there is on your academic performances of your playing of smartphone games? (1→No impact, 5→Highly impacted)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

10. How much will you be affected if the classmate beside you is playing smartphone games? (1→No impact, 5→Highly impacted)

- 1
- 2
- 3



4

5

11. Do you think your eyesight is impacted by playing smartphone games?

Yes

No

12. Do you think your general health is impacted by playing smartphone games?

Yes

No

13. Do you think your daily routine is affected by playing smartphone games? (For example, playing games late at night resulting in being unable to get up early for class)

Yes

No

14. How beneficial do you think playing smartphone games is? (1→Completely not beneficial, 5→Definitely beneficial)

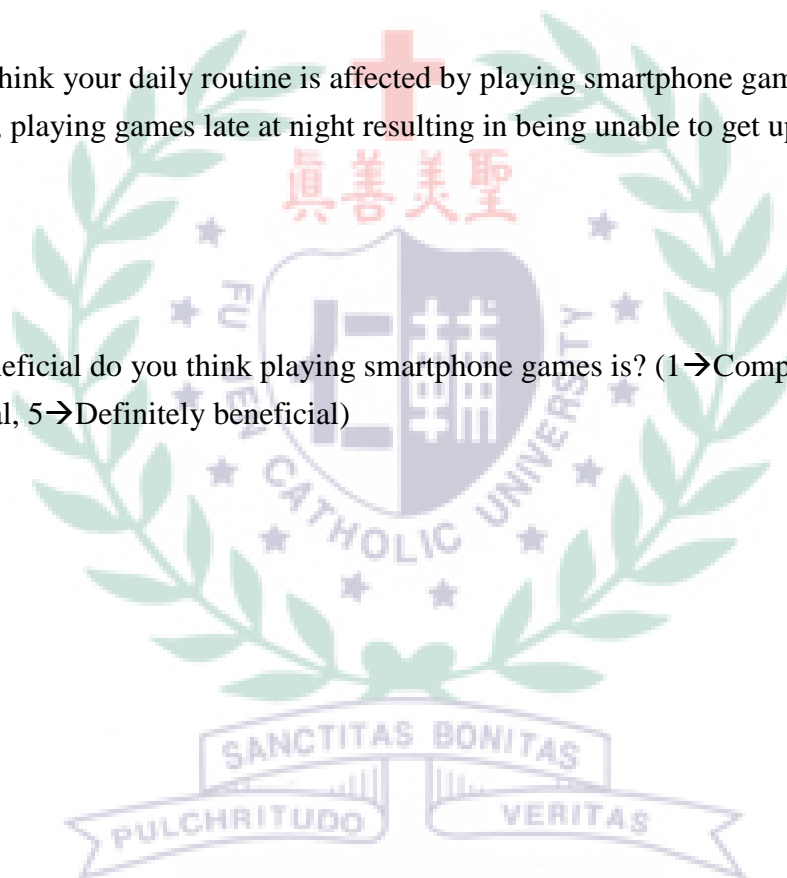
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