



Activity 1-Examine Interview Report

Germany

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1 Introduction

This report summarises relevant findings from the interviews¹ with the focus group conducted as part of the FITING4YOU project. The group discussions took place in various fields such as bus stop, Kebab restaurant, or playground. These places were carefully chosen with the participants of the group discussions. The interviews were conducted in groups without names to guarantee anonymity of the participants. The groups discussions were conducted by the project group.

The findings outlined in this report are exclusively derived from the insights of participants involved in the group discussions and, as such, should not be considered generalisable to the wider population.

Analyse of the interviews

To analyse and conclude insights collected from the interviews qualitative content analysis was used. Quantitative content analysis aims to extract information from the material that can only be inferred interpretatively. Qualitative content analysis ties in with the hermeneutical tradition of understanding. For this reason, quantitative content analysis not only aims to reproduce information, but also to understand and interpret.

During the content analysis, participant responses were systematically coded and organized into categories, with similar responses clustered under overarching thematic groupings.

2 Participants

The interviews were conducted on 5 days with 5 groups between September and November 2024. The interview participants were between the ages of 16 and 21. A total of 20 young people took part in the group discussions. Group sizes ranged from 2 to 5 participants and were self-selected, allowing individuals to choose whom they felt most comfortable speaking with. These measures were taken to positively support the participants' willingness to speak during the group discussions. Efforts were made to achieve gender balance among the participants.

One interviewer took part in each group discussion to create a more relaxed atmosphere that encourages the participants to speak.

¹ In this report, the terms group discussions, group talks, group conversations, and interviews are used interchangeably.

The interview questions were memorized by the leader of the group discussion to be able to ask the questions without sheets. The questions during the group discussions were asked flexibly, following the natural flow of conversation. However, when writing the summaries, the responses were structured according to the order of the questions in the interview guide. Note-taking during group discussions was kept to a minimum so as not to influence the flow of the participants' speech. Summaries of the group discussions were written shortly after the interviews in order to preserve as much information as possible.

All participants visited special schools focused on learning development. However, no specific information was collected regarding the nature of their individual learning difficulties.

3 Event description

The group discussions lasted between 20 and 40 minutes. The participating young people spoke openly about their behaviour regarding gaming and social media. However, the level of participation varied: while some engaged actively, others contributed only a few words with limited informational content.

The order of the questions was changed during the group discussions to adapt the questions to the flow of the speech of participants and to create a more relaxed atmosphere. The changed order of the questions caused the group discussions to flow without interruptions.

If the interviewer noticed that certain questions caused discomfort or resistance, those questions were skipped in order to ensure the full privacy and well-being of the participants.

After the group discussions the summaries were written. Memory protocols were written to all group discussions. When writing the memory protocols, the key findings were recorded. To give structure to the protocols, the answers were presented in the order of the corresponding interview questions in the interview guide.

4 Results

4.1 Online Games

Preferred games

According to the group talks young people play games such as “**Fortnite**”, “**FC Sport**” / “**Fifa**”, “**GTA**”, “**Farming simulator**”, “**Clash of Clans**”, “**Call of Duty**”, “**Brawl Stars**” and “**Dragon feeding**”.

Young people who participate in group discussions find the games interesting, but the main reason for playing these games seems to be the **opportunity to fill their free time with activities**. They play games with their friends online. Some of the participants in the interviews said that they don’t have other hobbies or friends living close to them. Gaming is the only thing that they do. This finding may also be related to the disadvantages of rural areas, where young people often face long travel distances to reach school or meet friends, and where leisure activities are often limited in smaller communities.

Time spends

Participants spend **from 2 hours up to 10 hours** on gaming related activities. It is difficult to accurately determine the number of hours spent, as participants often alternate between playing games and watching others play or consuming gaming-related content. Young women appear to spend fewer hours engaging in gaming-related activities. They rather spend time on social media related behaviours such as watching posts, chatting or producing content.

Young people tend to spend less time playing games during the week due to school commitments but often increase their gaming time on weekends. Some participants said they really had to force themselves to do something other than gaming.

Costs related to gaming

It varies how much money young people spend on gaming related to gaming fees and in-app purchases. Young people seem to prefer games which can be downloaded for free such as “Fortnite”. In the case of “FC Sport” young people also preorder the game to be able to play it sooner and get certain advantages such as packs. They are willing to spend more solely for the purpose of preordering the game. Some of the participants mentioned that they spend more than 1000 Euro on FIFA.

The young people interviewed reported spending most of their time and money on free-to-play video games. According to the interviews young people spend money in games mainly on in-game purchases for buying skins, dances, better weapons, colour for cars or better players. These purchases are made to customize characters and achieve better performance in the games.

One of the participants pointed out that he used to spend a lot more money, but now he is not allowed to spend as much. "I must focus on the school. My parents prohibited me". He said that in the past he spent too much money on games. Now he has a monthly budget that he can spend. He refused to say how much money he had spent. When asked how much he is allowed to spend now, he replied, "It's a lot less." Additionally, he mentioned that he is no longer interested in playing games without spending money because it takes too long, and he gets bored.

According to the group discussions, young people often have no overview of how much money they spend on games monthly. They can only estimate it. Some of the participants said that they do not want to know how much money they spend on games. Participants found it easier to state how much money they spend on games in total. This may be because they lack monthly income such as pocket money or salary.

Most of the young people interviewed do not have a lot of purchasing power. Among participants who make in-game purchases, the average monthly expenditure on games is approximately 20 to 30 euros. However, some peaks were identified related to spending on games. Some young people spend over 1,000 euros on games. These amounts do not refer to monthly purchases, but rather to buying things when they need them or when they have some extra money over a year or two.

However, not all young people spend money on games. In some cases, parents monitor their children's purchases and often do not allow them to spend money on games. Spending money on games seems to be a point of contention in some families.

Some participants are unwilling to purchase items, instead hoping that the game will reward them with the items for good performance or simply as a bonus.

The "random gifts" from games are an incentive to spend more time playing games and increase the amount of time young people spend playing games.

Young people who choose not to make in-game purchases often have to compensate by spending more time playing in order to achieve the same performance or appearance as those who do.

4.2 Social media

Social platforms and behaviours

According to the group discussions young people use mainly TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp and Twitch to get in contact with others. Young people mainly watch short videos and create videos for these platforms. Participants often watch videos across multiple social media platforms simultaneously.

Time spends on social media

According to the group discussions young people use social media platforms from 2 up to 12 hours per day. Young people use school breaks, travel times and other short breaks to watch videos on these platforms. The participants mainly use social media platforms to avoid getting bored even during short breaks. In the afternoons or on weekends, they have more time to engage with social media.

They also create various content to share on social media. They send photos and videos to friends and edit photos and videos. Having likes and followers was generally not important to young people in the interviews. Some of them only want to create content for themselves or their family, but some already have 3,000 followers. Creating content significantly increases the time young people spend on social media. They carefully plan, edit, and select the material they wish to share across different platforms. Video editing—such as applying filters and cutting—is carried out using a variety of digital tools.

According to the interviews, young people were online on social media more during the weekend. Some of the young people who participated in the interviews are online for 10 to 12 hours a day.

All participants reported losing track of time while using social media. As a result, they often neglected tasks they had planned to do, such as tidying up, helping their parents, or getting ready for school.

Costs related to social media

According to the interviews young people use only social media platforms free of charge. They also use mostly tools relevant for creating content and videos for free of charge.

Young people were excited about products advertised by influencers on social media. They buy sometimes smaller items such as energy drinks, lighter, books, hoodies or towels with the

logo of the influencer. After receiving the items, not all of them were satisfied with the taste or quality of the product purchased.

Some of the participants told in the interviews that they sometimes donate money for influencers in live stream. They donated money to be named in the live stream. Participants found it very funny when they heard their username. One of the participants donated 20 euros, which was viewed negatively by the influencer. According to the participants, young people often donate money to influencers so that they do something special, like shave their hair or buy a better car.

Experiencing Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying was mentioned in the interviews related to gaming and social media platforms.

Cyberbullying related to gaming

According to the interviews, young people are verbally and written insulted on gaming platforms. However, some young people are not bothered by these insults. They see insulting each other as part of the game. If young people dislike this behaviour, they report the person and hope they will face consequences such as banned from the platform. Participants stated that they also insult other players with swear words. Some young people were kicked out of the games several times. As they explained, sometimes they can only get back into the game after a certain period or must create a new account to be able to play again.

Cyberbullying related to social media

According to participants, cyberbullying is not a major phenomenon on social media. Some participants mentioned receiving negative comments on their posts but did not consider it cyberbullying or pay much attention to it.

4.3 Role models

According to participants, they were less likely to follow someone on social media. They watch content related to their interests (based on their algorithms). Young people in particular do not watch influencers, but rather just browse their feed and watch the short videos from unknown creators or friends. However, when asked about specific influencers, they are up to date with their posts. This may be because social media plays the influencers' content if the content matches the participants' interests without following the person.

According to the interviews, young people watch videos according to their interests: funny or gaming-related videos or sports videos and beauty videos. When asked why they watch these videos, young people answered: "They are funny" and "They are interesting."

Costs related to influencers

According to the participants, young people find the various products promoted by influencers on social media interesting and fun. They also buy some of these items such as energy drinks, ice tea, t-shirts, lighters, hoodies, books and towels. They also get them as gifts from their families and friends. The things young people can afford are in the lower price segment and the products they get as gifts are more expensive.

In some cases, young people also send money to influencers as "donation". In this case, they send money to be mentioned on the livestream. Influencers sometimes thank users who donate money or insult them for not sending enough money. According to the interviews, participants find it funny to be mentioned on the livestream and are proud of it. One of the participants repeatedly sent influencers 20 EURO. However, there are also young people who spend more money to get special attention from the influencer.

4.4 Security

Participants reported that they lost accounts and items due to cybercrime. Some of the participants were unable to access their game accounts. Participants lost items stored on their game accounts, along with the money spent on them. Some reported losing in-game items, which they then had to repurchase or regain through gameplay.

One of the female participants said that she was unable to access her account on social media and lost the content she created and her followers.

Security settings related to passwords also seem to lead to account loss on gaming and social media platforms. Some of the young people reported losing accounts with items or content and followers because they forgot the passwords.

5 Summary and future perspective

The face-to-face interviews conducted deliver findings and insights about how young people spend money online related to gaming and social media and how much time they spend on gaming and social media related activities.

Key findings

- Young people in the interviews spend from 2 to 10 hours on gaming and from 2 to 12 hours on social media. Young people were only able to estimate how much time they spend on these activities. In some cases, however, it was difficult to separate the time spent on gaming from time spent on social media, as they also create or watch 'Let's Play' videos. The creation of such content blurs the line between gaming and social media use.
- In the context of gaming and social media, young people often report losing track of time. They describe having to consciously force themselves to disengage, as the content is highly engaging and tailored.
- When asked about their spending on online games and social media, many young people found it difficult to give precise answers. Those who do spend money were only able to provide rough estimates. A key finding is that young people generally lack a clear overview of their expenditures in this area. Some participants even reported spending all of their available money on games and related activities.
- Because of tailored social media algorithm, young people follow fewer people. They are more likely to watch content that matches their interests.

The findings introduced in this report will be used in further activities of the project to design workshops for young people with additional needs and create recommendations for pedagogical practices.



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