Workshop Report

Ireland

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1.   Introduction

This report outlines the delivery and outcomes of the FITING4YOU workshop held in Cavan, Ireland, as part of the FITING4YOU project. The workshop was designed to explore the gaming habits, preferences, and experiences of young people, with a focus on fostering open discussion and raising awareness around healthy digital engagement. Through a combination of informative presentations, creative expression, and group dialogue, the session aimed to gather valuable insights while providing a safe and inclusive environment for participants to share their views. The following sections detail the setting, content, participant feedback, and key findings from the workshop.

2.   Participant Description, Date & Venue

This workshop was held with a youth group in Cavan town on February 25th from 5pm to 7:15pm with a total of 12 young people. This organisation supports young people who are on the autism spectrum and also part of the LGBTQ+ community. Young people in attendance often struggle with social interaction and confidence and need a safe space to come to meet other young people similar to them. This event was carried out with individuals who identify as male, female and non-binary.

3.   Workshop Method & Content

This workshop was carried out by the training facilitator in one session with the target audience as per the guidelines. The session was carried out over the space of two hours with the intention of having an open group discussion surrounding the gaming habits of the young people in the room. This includes spending habits, types of games they enjoy, periods they play, how it may impact on their relationships and daily lives, etc.

To make this session interactive, it was delivered with an introduction presentation with some current information surrounding gaming and how it can impact mental health. Following this, a creative activity was facilitated by the trainer where participants were asked to draw, write, or create a poster to show and record their favourite games, opinions, and thoughts with the prompt of some reflective questions.

Participants were then asked some feedback on the session by answering yes or no questions with time at the end to also ask questions.

4.   Event Description

Time	Agenda Item	Facilitation Method

| 17:00	Welcome and Introduction	Trainer Input
17:10	Icebreaker Activity	Group Activity

17:20	Overview of the FITING4YOU project
	  - Aims
	  - Objectives
	  - Gaming statistics in Ireland
	  - Mental Health Support
		Tutor Input

17:40	Break	
17:50	Group Activity - Facilitating Discussions through art-based engagement	Group Activity
18:30	Group Discussion	Group Discussion
18:45	Feedback and Evaluation	
19:00	Q&A	
19:15	Workshop close	Tutor Input

The event commenced at 5pm with a warm welcome extended to all participants, followed by an introductory presentation on the FITING4YOU project. This introduction outlined the project's core aims, objectives, and its intended impact on both young people and youth workers. The facilitator then presented up-to-date statistics on gaming habits, including the most commonly used consoles, average daily screen time, and electronic device usage among young people. This was followed by a discussion on the potential mental health impacts associated with excessive screen time. Participants were also provided with information on the importance of self-care practices, including regular sleep, physical activity, and social engagement, before taking a short break.

Following the break, participants were divided into two groups and provided with large sheets of paper and markers. They were invited to creatively express their thoughts and opinions on gaming through drawings and written reflections. Group discussions were supported by prompting questions from the facilitator, such as: "What devices do you use the most?", "What are your favourite games and why?", and "What game genres appeal to you the most?". Each group then presented their creative outputs to the larger group.

To conclude, the participants took part in a voting exercise, responding with 'yes' or 'no' to a series of questions drawn from the piloting guidelines. Some of these questions prompted further discussion, allowing the group to share and reflect on their perspectives. The session ended with an open floor for any final questions.

5. Evaluation

5.1 Participant Current Status
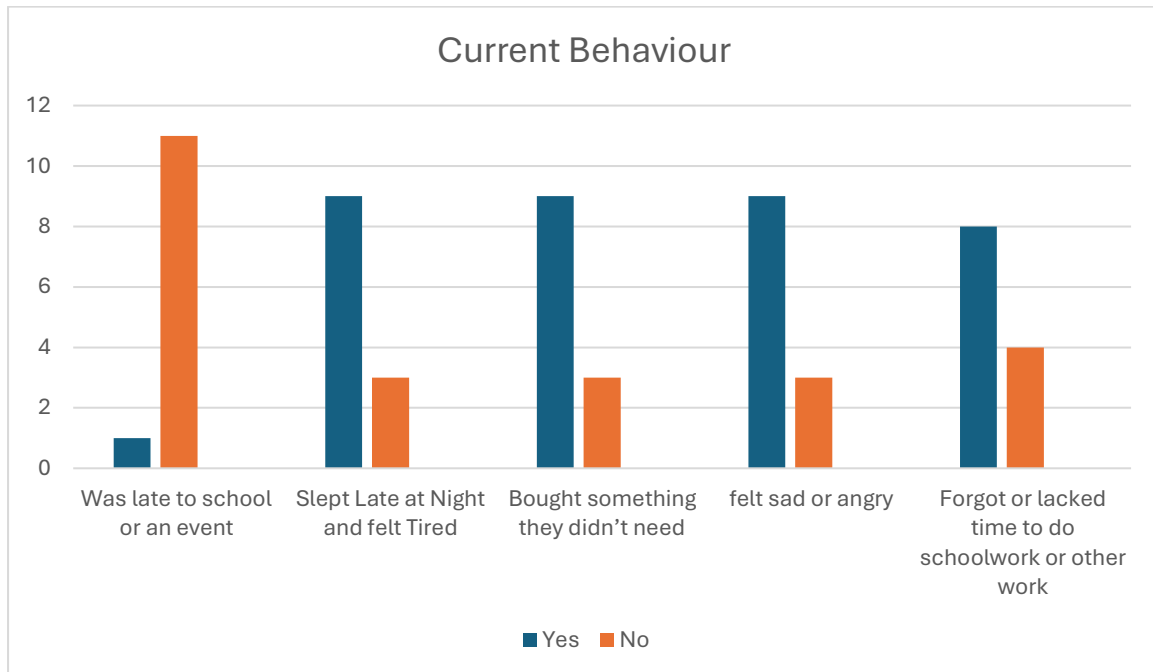
During the group discussion, one young person shared that they often feel frustrated while gaming, rather than experiencing sadness or anger. They explained that frustration was a more significant issue for them. It was also highlighted that the emotions they did feel were more connected to the game's storyline, where they empathised with the characters, rather than being a result of the gameplay itself. The participant also noted that gaming can sometimes feel isolating, particularly due to the decline of local multiplayer games in favour of online games that are played individually within group settings.

Additionally, the group mentioned that they tend to spend money on gaming-related merchandise and cosmetic items, rather than directly within the games themselves.

5.2 General Workshop Reception
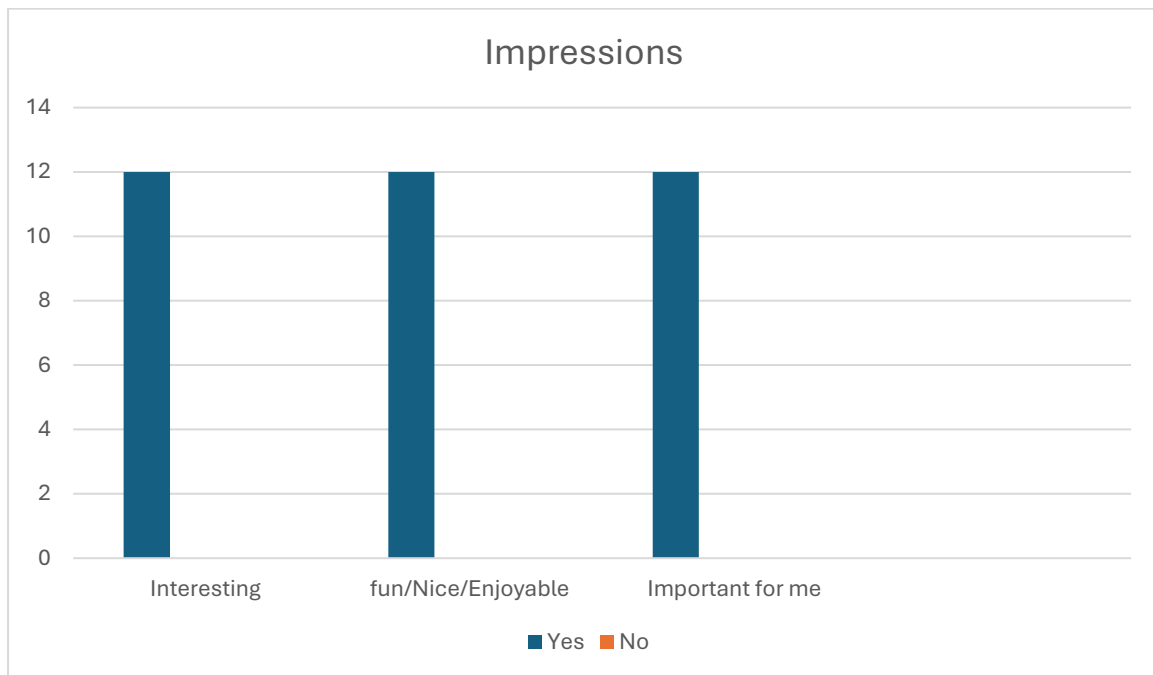
The session received very positive feedback from the young participants. They expressed that it was interesting to learn about the gaming interests and habits of their peers. Many appreciated the opportunity to share their own experiences and views, noting that it was the first time someone had taken the time to ask for their opinions on gaming. They felt it was refreshing and enjoyable to be able to openly discuss their passion in a supportive environment.

5.3 Learning

These findings emerged as the group's primary focus centred around online gaming, with only a few participants expressing an interest in social media. Most reported spending their evenings on PC desktop computers or using what they referred to as "vintage" gaming consoles, such as Nintendo, the Wii, Game Boy, Xbox, or PlayStation. The majority noted that they do not typically pay for games, instead favouring free versions or online trials. Many also mentioned purchasing second-hand games at discounted prices and sharing them with friends.

Participants shared that they had learned a lot during the workshop, particularly about the variety of platforms and genres that others were using. Several were surprised to discover how much time they were personally spending online in comparison to their peers, prompting reflection on what a healthy relationship with gaming might look like.

5.4 Willingness to Change
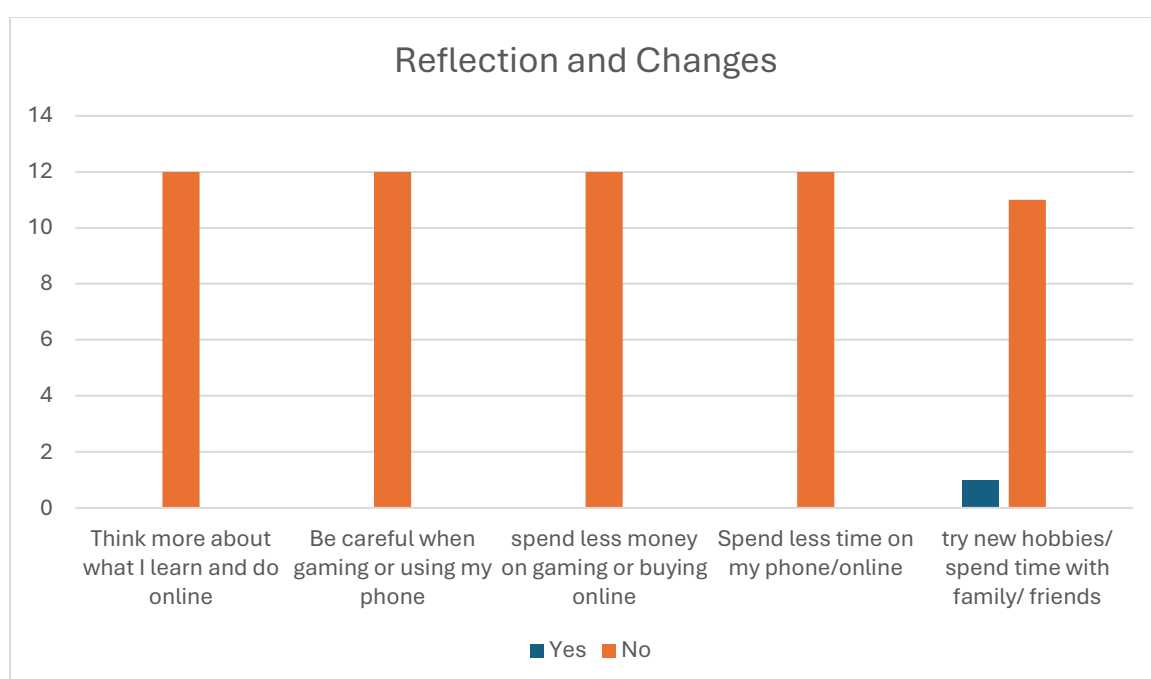
While the chart above reflects the group's voting responses to the question posed, it is worth noting that some participants may have been hesitant to answer honestly in a group setting. Throughout the workshop discussions, it became clear that many of the young people have a wide range of creative interests and hobbies outside of gaming. These included drawing, crochet, music, photography, and reading. They also regularly attend this youth group on a weekly basis, which they all expressed enjoying.

One participant jokingly remarked, "I should get out and touch the grass more," highlighting a sense of humour and self-awareness around their online habits. These conversations suggest that the young people are open to spending less time online, even if they may not feel entirely comfortable discussing it openly among their peers. In terms of spending habits, most felt their behaviour would remain largely unchanged, as they are already quite mindful—preferring second-hand games and free trials to more expensive purchases.

6. Reflection and Sum Up

Overall, the workshop proved to be a positive and engaging experience for the young participants. They were open and willing to share their thoughts and opinions, with the relaxed atmosphere of the session, supported by a creative art activity, helping to foster comfort and open communication in a social setting.

The trainer was able to gather meaningful feedback through both open group discussions and individual voting, allowing for a more accurate reflection of participants' views without the influence of peer pressure. Additionally, the trainer invited the young people to share their ideas for activities they would like to see more of in the local community to encourage face-to-face social interaction. Suggestions included music concerts and outdoor events in the local parks.

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