index•communication
Revista científica de comunciación aplicada
nº. 16(2) 2026 | Pages 93-116
e-ISSN: 2174-1859 | ISSN: 2444-3239

Gaming in Latin America: An Exploration of Consumption Practices, Emotions, Motivations, and Perceived Health Impacts

Videojugar en América Latina: exploración de prácticas de consumo, emociones, motivaciones y percepciones de impacto en la salud

Received on 19/01/2026 | Accepted on 18/05/2026 | Published on 15/07/2026
https://doi.org/10.62008/ixc/16/02Videoj

Dr. Raúl Alejandro Treviño González | Universidad TecMilenio
raultg@tecmilenio.mx | https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5427-1277
Dra. Tania Lucía Cobos Cobos | Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar
tcobos@utb.edu.co | https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8348-3631

Abstract: This article analyzes gaming practices in Latin America from a generational perspective, considering intensity of use, routines, motivations, associated emotions, and self-perceived effects on physical and mental health. The study engages the debate on video games as a service (GaaS) and is based on an online survey conducted between April and May 2024 with 1,304 participants, using convenience sampling and dissemination through digital social networks. Based on descriptive statistics, the results show continuities across generations: gaming intensifies during weekends, and age-related differences are moderate, although Generation Z reports higher frequency and intensity. Motivations related to challenge, narrative exploration, aesthetic enjoyment, and stress relief predominate. Most participants do not perceive negative impacts, except for sleep disturbances and visual or musculoskeletal discomfort.

Keywords: Video Games; Latin America; Motivations; Emotions; Health; Perceptions.

Resumen: Este artículo analiza las prácticas de consumo de videojuegos en América Latina desde una perspectiva generacional, considerando intensidad de uso, rutinas, motivaciones, emociones asociadas y autopercepción de efectos sobre la salud física y mental. El estudio dialoga con el debate sobre los videojuegos como servicio (GaaS) y se basa en una encuesta en línea aplicada entre abril y mayo de 2024 a 1.304 participantes, mediante muestreo por conveniencia y difusión en redes sociales digitales. A partir de estadística descriptiva, los resultados muestran continuidad entre generaciones: el juego se intensifica durante los fines de semana y las diferencias por edad son moderadas, aunque la Generación Z presenta mayor frecuencia e intensidad. Predominan motivaciones vinculadas al reto, la exploración narrativa, el disfrute estético y el desestrés. La mayoría no percibe impactos negativos, salvo alteraciones del sueño y molestias visuales o musculoesqueléticas.

Palabras clave: videojuegos; América Latina; motivaciones; emociones; salud; percepciones.

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To cite this work: Treviño González, R. A. y Cobos Cobos, T. L. (2026). Gaming in Latin America: An Exploration of Consumption Practices, Emotions, Motivations, and Perceived Health Impacts *index.comunicación, 16*(2), 93-116.
https://doi.org/10.62008/ixc/16/02Videoj

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, video game consumption has increased significantly in Latin America, becoming integrated into daily leisure and entertainment routines. In countries such as Mexico, 53% of the population plays video games; in Brazil, 45%; and in Chile, 41% (Statista, 2023). Overall, the industry in the region is valued at approximately six billion dollars (Statista, 2024), underscoring its growing economic and cultural importance. Furthermore, video games are expanding into diverse contexts due to access conditions and local socioeconomic dynamics that have shaped the history of consumption (Treviño & Cobos, 2025a; 2025b).

In parallel, over the last decade, the industry has consolidated around connected and persistent models, especially Games as a Service (GaaS), characterized by continuous updates, seasons, limited events, and reward systems that incentivize frequent returns and prolonged engagement (Hamari *et al.,* 2020; Nieborg, 2016). These dynamics encourage more frequent and long-lived forms of play, thus allowing video games to become part of everyday routines of entertainment, socialization, and cultural consumption.

This growth has been drawing scientific interest due to its psychological, emotional, and social implications. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) recognized gaming disorder as a persistent or recurrent pattern in which gaming takes precedence over other areas of life, which has spurred research on problematic gaming use and its associated mental health effects (Petry *et al.*, 2015). However, the literature warns that most gamers maintain a healthy relationship with video games and that risks tend to concentrate around certain subgroups with pre-existing vulnerabilities (Ferguson *et al.,* 2011; Przybylski & Weinstein, 2019). Likewise, recent research shows that gaming experiences are associated with relaxation, emotional engagement, and narrative exploration, which are shaped by cultural and generational factors (Treviño, 2026).

From the perspective of Cultural Studies, video games are understood as leisure and socialization practices through which players experience enjoyment, emotional involvement, and narrative exploration that are linked to their daily lives (Corona, 2018; Cote, 2020). Along these lines, an intersectional perspective recognizes how gender, class, and cultural context influence gaming experiences, a point that is especially relevant in Latin America due to the coexistence of inequalities and unique technocultural consumption trajectories (Crenshaw, 1989; Treviño & Cobos, 2025a; 2025b).

In this context, it is relevant to observe not only whether people play video games, but also how gaming is integrated into daily life: how many hours

are invested weekly, what motivations drive play, what emotions are experienced during gameplay, and what impacts are perceived on physical and mental well-being. By the same token, it is important to investigate the cultural value attributed to video games, the role they play in the daily lives of Latin American gamers, and why their preservation as a cultural form is considered relevant. However, empirical gaps remain regarding the relationships among gaming intensity, motivations, emotions, self-perceived impacts on physical and mental health, and the cultural meanings attributed to video games among Latin American gamers.

Given that technological socialization and cultural consumption trajectories differ across cohorts, this study compares results by generation. Therefore, this article aims to describe and compare, in a sample of video gamers in Latin America, (a) weekly gaming intensity (reported hours), (b) motivations for playing, (c) emotions associated with playing, (d) self-perceived impacts on physical and mental health, and (e) the personal importance and reasons for cultural preservation attributed to video games. These findings are discussed considering the contemporary debate on Games as a Service (GaaS) and its retention and engagement dynamics.

2. GaaS and Persuasive Design: Retention and Game Intensity

The rise of *Games as a Service* (GaaS) in titles such as *Fortnite* (2017) and *Genshin Impact* (2020) has contributed to changing the way players relate to video games by consolidating connected experiences sustained by continuous updates, seasons, and reward systems that incentivize frequent returns and prolonged engagement (Hamari *et al.,* 2020; Nieborg, 2016). In this model, game design seeks to increase recurrence and uphold engagement through protracted progression and continuous content cycles.

Among the most common strategies are daily rewards, recurring tasks, and progression based on short objectives, which act as incentives for players to return regularly (Hamari *et al.,* 2020). Likewise, some games incorporate mechanics that structure progress over time windows, such as limited events, waiting periods, or energy systems, which can modulate the pace of play and reinforce regular patterns of engagement (Zagal *et al.,* 2013). Taken altogether, these dynamics contribute to intensifying gameplay and integrating it into daily life, which is relevant to understanding play habits and well-being experiences (Hamari *et al.,* 2020).

These practices do not necessarily imply clinical risks, but they can generate pressure to remain active and reorganize daily time around gaming. In this study, the tension between design oriented toward retention and player agency is used to contextualize the reported weekly intensity of gaming and, in a complementary way, the motivations and emotions associated with gaming, given that these experiences occur within environments designed to sustain constant participation.

3. Motivations and Emotional Experiences of Play: Cultural and Psychological Perspectives

To interpret the reported motivations and emotions, it is helpful to conceive of play as a situated practice in which players experience different forms of enjoyment, emotional involvement, narrative exploration, and socialization. From this perspective, playing is not limited to content consumption but also involves interacting with others, belonging to communities, and engaging in forms of cultural participation linked to digital entertainment (Cote, 2020; Treviño, 2026). This approach allows us to understand why players sustain the practice over time and what meanings they attribute to video games in their daily lives.

On a psychological level, motivations are usually organized around needs that video games consistently satisfy. Self-determination theory holds that motivation is strengthened when an activity promotes autonomy (choice), competence (mastery and achievement), and relatedness (connection with others) (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In video games, these dimensions help explain common motives, such as testing skills, progressing, cooperating or competing, exploring narrative worlds, or sustaining social interactions in digital environments (Ryan *et al.,* 2006). This framework allows for the interpretation of the reported motivations without assuming that high dedication is necessarily problematic; in many cases, recurrence is linked to the sustained pursuit of achievement, recognition, and shared experiences.

The emotions associated with gameplay have also been addressed from approaches focused on experiences of involvement and immersion. The concept of *flow* suggests that, when there is a balance between challenge and skills, concentration, immersion, and the loss of the sense of time are facilitated, which translates into enjoyment and continuity of practice (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). In contemporary video games, these experiences can be expressed through different forms of enjoyment linked to challenge, narrative exploration, relaxation, socialization, or a sense of competition, which vary across generational trajec-

tories and prior gaming experiences (Treviño, 2026). This framework is relevant for interpreting the affective states reported during gameplay and their relationship to the intensity of use.

Finally, motivations and emotions are shaped in contexts marked by inequalities and sociocultural trajectories. An intersectional perspective (Crenshaw, 1989) underscores the fact that media experiences vary across social positions, shaping opportunities for access, socialization, and recognition within gaming communities. In Latin America, where structural inequalities and particular forms of technocultural appropriation coexist, this approach helps to contextualize differences in the integration of gaming into everyday life (Treviño & Cobos, 2025a). When considered as a whole, these cultural and psychological perspectives provide a framework for interpreting the results on motivations and emotions, as well as their relationship to the place video games occupy in everyday life.

4. Well-being, Dysregulated Use and Health: Torn Between Benefits, Discomforts and Clinical Criteria

The relationship between video games and well-being is not limited to a dichotomy between «good» and «bad». In everyday life, gaming can be part of recreational and social routines that involve relaxation, enjoyment, and stress management (Treviño & Cobos, 2025b). However, in certain cases, intensive use can be associated with physical and psychological discomfort, especially when gaming displaces other important activities or becomes difficult to balance with other daily routines.

From a clinical perspective, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) included gaming disorder in the ICD-11, defining it as a pattern characterized by impaired control, prioritization of gaming over other areas of life, and persistence despite negative consequences. Along similar lines, Petry *et al.,* (2015) emphasize these dimensions (control, priority, and continuation despite harm) and warn that identifying the disorder entails persistence and significant impairment. This distinction is central because gaming time alone is not tantamount to a disorder; moreover, evidence suggests that risks are not distributed uniformly and that the associations between video games and distress depend on personal, social, and contextual factors (Ferguson *et al.,* 2011; Przybylski & Weinstein, 2019).

Additionally, it has been proposed that dysregulated use be understood as a motivational and psychosocial phenomenon rather than a direct conse-

quence of game content, which emphasizes the need to contextualize the distress (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2019). This is relevant for interpreting mental health reports in this study—such as sleep problems, anxiety, irritability, isolation, or mental fatigue—as self-perceptions associated with gaming practices, without automatically assuming a clinical diagnosis.

In addition to psychological well-being, video games can have physical health effects related to exposure and posture, such as eye strain, headaches, musculoskeletal discomfort (neck/back/shoulders), and pain in the hands or wrists. The literature on musculoskeletal discomfort reports associations with sustained postures and prolonged sessions (Tholl *et al.,* 2022), while reviews on screen-related eye strain describe ocular and extraocular symptoms, including headaches and fatigue, linked to prolonged use of digital devices (Kaur *et al.,* 2022). Complementarily, a systematic review identifies relationships between problematic video game use and sleep (shorter duration, poorer quality, and difficulties falling asleep) (Kristensen *et al.,* 2021). All in all, this framework guides the interpretation of the results as indicators of possible tensions between gaming intensity, bodily habits, and perceived well-being, rather than as diagnostic evidence.

5. Centrality and Cultural Value of Video Games: Personal Importance, Community, and Preservation

Beyond entertainment, video games play a significant role in the daily lives of many players as cultural practices linked to socialization, affective memory, and participation in gaming communities (Corona, 2018; Cote, 2020). Along these lines, an intersectional perspective (Crenshaw, 1989) emphasizes that the gaming experience is not homogeneous: gender, class, and sociocultural context influence access, participation, and the meanings attributed to video games. In Latin America, these differences are linked to particular trajectories of technocultural appropriation and persistent inequalities; in addition, recent research has documented gender-based differences in gaming practices and preferences (Treviño & Cobos, 2025a; 2025b).

In everyday life, the importance attributed to video games is often associated with relaxation and disconnection from daily stress, as well as socialization with friends or family, creative inspiration, and perceived educational value. These functions relate to the idea that contemporary gaming is embedded in participatory spaces where users not only consume, but also converse, share meanings, and sustain communities around common cultural practices (Jenkins, 2006). Additionally, video games can also be valued for fostering skills

linked to problem-solving and situated forms of learning, which helps explain the importance assigned to their educational dimension (Gee, 2007).

Finally, cultural value is also expressed in preservation: conserving video games for their historical, educational, artistic, and narrative value, as well as for their connection to emotional memory (nostalgia) and their availability for future generations. Conceiving video games as a cultural practice implies recognizing that preservation is not limited to the technical object, but also includes its social meanings, modes of participation, and community experiences (Cote, 2020; Jenkins, 2006). This framework helps contextualize why participants ascribe relevance both to the centrality of video games in their daily lives and to preservation-related reasons linked to cultural heritage and social memory in a Latin American context, where forms of access and appropriation are marked by inequalities and diverse trajectories (Treviño & Cobos, 2025a).

6. Methodology

This document is the result of the parent research project «Behavior and Consumption of Latin American Video Game Players», conducted jointly by Tecnológico de Monterrey (Monterrey Campus), Mexico, and Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar (Cartagena de Indias), Colombia. The project aimed to understand the behaviors and consumption patterns of video game players in the region, focusing on aspects such as initiation, practices, consumption, preferences, motivations, emotions, gameplay duration, self-perception, recognition, socialization, monetization, and health. This article specifically examines motivations, emotions, playing duration, self-perception, and health.

The research was developed under a quantitative approach, understood as a paradigm oriented toward the objective measurement of variables and the analysis of results through statistical procedures, with the purpose of explaining and anticipating the behavior of the phenomena studied (Hernández *et al.*, 2014). The scope of the study is descriptive and interpretive: descriptive because it seeks to characterize properties, profiles, and manifestations of the phenomenon in the surveyed population; and interpretive because it seeks to understand the meaning of these practices based on the meanings that people attribute to their experience (Hernández *et al*., 2014).

The instrument consisted of a 48-item survey with conditional response paths, so the number of items actually answered could vary depending on the respondents' prior choices. Multiple-choice, mandatory questions with detailed options predominated; in several cases, an «other» option was included to expand responses. Likert-type scales were also used, and a final, optional, open-

ended question was included for additional comments. The questionnaire collected demographic information such as age, country of origin, and professional field and, for the purposes of this article, included items aimed at characterizing gameplay duration (time spent gaming), motivations for playing, emotions or affective states experienced during gameplay, and self-perceived impacts on physical and mental health associated with gaming.

The survey was available online through Qualtrics between April 12th and May 12th, 2024. It was distributed using organic and paid strategies on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and Discord, with an emphasis on reaching adults. The sample was non-probabilistic and based on convenience sampling: participants were video game players of all genders with internet access, a presence on these platforms, and residence in Latin American countries. As an incentive, a USD $20 gift card redeemable at a video game store (Nintendo, Xbox, PlayStation, or Steam) was raffled off. A total of 1,305 valid responses were obtained from multiple countries in the region (North America, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean).

Among the limitations, given the voluntary nature of the survey, its dissemination through social media and digital platforms, and the incentive offered, the sample depended on exposure to the instrument and participants' interest in responding. Therefore, the results are neither representative nor generalizable to all Latin American video game players, although the 1,304 valid responses allow for a descriptive analysis of the participating group. It should also be noted that the questionnaire was distributed only in Spanish, which reduced participation from Brazil, and connectivity and technological access restrictions in Cuba affected the volume of responses.

The data were initially processed in Microsoft Excel 365, where a preliminary data cleanup was performed, retaining only the variables relevant to the analysis. At this stage, distributions, percentages, and descriptive statistics were calculated using pivot tables and built-in functions (AVERAGE, MEDIAN, STDEV). The file was then exported to CSV format and processed in Python 3.10 using the ChatGPT Plus code runtime environment, with pandas 2.2 (read_csv, groupby, value_counts, to_excel) and numpy 1.26 for additional descriptive statistics. The procedure included explicit column typing, missing-value detection (isna), aggregation by gender, country, and age, and cross-validation against the Excel results using XLOOKUP, with discrepancies of less than 0.1%.

7. Results

As shown in Table 1, 1,305 responses were collected from Latin American video game players, with 81.2% (1,060) identifying as male, 16.9% (220) as female, and 1.9% (25) identifying with another gender. Regarding the participants' region of origin, South America had the highest participation (45.5%), followed by Central America (26.4%) and North America (23.4%); finally, the Caribbean accounted for 4.6% of respondents.

Regarding age, participants were grouped by generation based on the criteria proposed by the Pew Research Center (Dimock, 2019), adapted to the context and year of data collection (2024). Under these criteria, Generation Z corresponds to individuals born between 1997 and 2012 (12-27 years old), Millennials to those born between 1981 and 1996 (28-43 years old), and Generation X to those born between 1965 and 1980 (44-59 years old). The sample was primarily focused on the following generations: Generation Z represented 50.7% (661), Millennials 42.5% (555), and Generation X 6.7% (88). No participation was recorded from Generation Alpha (2013-2024) or the Silent Generation (before 1945), while the presence of Baby Boomers (1946-1964) was minimal (0.1%). For this reason, this group was excluded from the generational analysis, resulting in a final sample of 1,304 participants accounting for 100% of the analyzed sample.

Table 1. *Sample composition*

Gender	N	%	Age in years as of 2024	N	%
Masculine	1,060	81.2%	Alpha Generation (0-11)	0	0%
Female	220	16.9%	Generation Z (12-27)	661	50.7%
Other	25	1.9%	Millennials (28-43)	555	42.5%
			Generation X (44–59)	88	6.7%
			Baby Boomers (60–78)	1	0.1%
			Silent Generation (79 or older)	0	0%
TOTAL	1,305	100%	TOTAL	1,305	100%

Geographic region	N	%
North America	306	23.4%
Central America	345	26.4%
South America	594	45.5%

Caribbean	60	4.6%
Total	1,305	60%

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Regarding weekly gaming hours, the results presented in Table 2 show similar routines across generations. In all age groups, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays account for the highest number of gaming hours, while from Monday to Thursday, time dedicated to video games remains at more moderate levels.

Generation Z consistently shows the highest average weekly gaming time, with 21.4 hours, followed by Millennials with 17.1 hours, and Generation X with 16.9 hours. Although the differences between consecutive generations are not particularly pronounced, a gap of approximately 5 hours emerges when comparing the group with the highest average weekly gaming time to the group with the lowest. Overall, the figures remain relatively close, with a simple average of 18.47 hours per week across generations.

Table 2. *Average daily gameplay hours by generation*

Day of the week	Generation Z (12-27)	Millennials (28-43)	Generation X (44-59)	Average across generations*
Monday	2.5	1.9	1.9	2.10
Tuesday	2.5	1.9	1.9	2.10
Wednesday	2.5	1.9	2	2.13
Thursday	2.5	1.9	1.9	2.10
Friday	3.1	2.5	2.3	2.63
Saturday	4.1	3.5	3.4	3.67
Sunday	4.2	3.5	3.5	3.73
Weekly average per generation**	21.4	17.1	16.9	18.47

* Simple average across generations (each generation weighted equally).
** Weekly average across generations, calculated as the simple average of each generation's weekly average.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

In Table 3, the most frequently reported motivation for playing video games was testing out skills, mental agility, and overcoming challenges (63.7%), followed by experiencing different narratives and worlds (56.1%),

aesthetic pleasure (52.9%), and escapism (48.7%). Since this was a multiple-choice question, these percentages are not mutually exclusive.

In the generational comparison, Millennials and Generation Z similarly prioritized challenge as the main motivation (62.9% and 63.4%, respectively), followed by experiencing different narratives and worlds (56.9% and 58.1%, respectively). Aesthetic pleasure ranked third in both groups, with a higher proportion among Generation Z participants (57.3%) than among Millennials (50.8%).

Generation X showed a different pattern. Although challenge remained the primary motivation (70.5%), escapism ranked second (44.3%). Experiencing different narratives and worlds ranked third (35.2%), representing a lower proportion than among Millennials and Generation Z. Aesthetic pleasure ranked fourth among Generation X participants (33.0%).

Table 3. *Motivations for playing by generation*

Motivations	Generation Z (12-27)	Millennials (28-43)	Generation X (44-59)	Total
Experience different narratives and worlds.	384 / 58.1%	316 / 56.9%	31 / 35.2%	731 / 56.1%
Socialize and connect with others.	206 / 31.2%	163 / 29.4%	18 / 20.5%	387 / 29.7%
Socialize and connect with oneself.	183 / 27.7%	121 / 21.8%	7 / 8.0%	311 / 23.8%
Explore and express identities (e.g., gender, race, sexuality).	64 / 9.7%	40 / 7.2%	3 / 3.4%	107 / 8.2%
Critically reflect on society and culture.	79 / 12.0%	44 / 7.9%	3 / 3.4%	126 / 9.7%
Experience aesthetic pleasure (art, music, graphic design).	379 / 57.3%	282 / 50.8%	29 / 33.0%	690 / 52.9%
Test out skills, mental agility, and overcome challenges.	419 / 63.4%	349 / 62.9%	62 / 70.5%	830 / 63.7%
To participate in specific cultures and communities.	66 / 10.0%	49 / 8.8%	5 / 5.7%	120 / 9.2%

To learn about topics or develop skills.	131 / 19.8%	81 / 14.6%	10 / 11.4%	222 / 17.0%
To escape from everyday reality or relieve stress.	329 / 49.8%	267 / 48.1%	39 / 44.3%	635 / 48.7%
I don't know	22 / 3.3%	10 / 1.8%	2 / 2.3%	34 / 2.6%

Source: Authors' elaboration.

In Table 4, the most frequently reported emotions in the total sample were feeling relaxed and stress-free (69.9%), focused and mentally stimulated (63.7%), excited and energized (53.6%), immersed in another world (42.1%), and happy or satisfied (40.7%). Since this was a multiple-choice question, these percentages are not mutually exclusive.

By generation, Generation Z and Millennials showed a similar pattern: the predominant emotions were feeling relaxed and stress-free (69.0% and 71.5%, respectively), focused and mentally stimulated (63.4% and 65.0%), and, in third place, excited and energized (57.3% and 51.4%). Generation X also primarily reported relaxation (67.0%) and mental stimulation (58.0%), although with a lower presence of emotions associated with excitement, immersion, and social connection. In fact, feelings of excitement and energy progressively decreased with age: 57.3% in Generation Z, 51.4% in Millennials, and 39.8% in Generation X.

Negative emotions were less prevalent overall but were more frequently reported by Generation Z, followed by Millennials. Feeling frustrated or anxious was reported by 12.4% of Generation Z participants, 7.0% of Millennials, and 4.5% of Generation X participants. Similarly, feeling powerful and invincible was more common among younger players: 20.7% in Generation Z, 12.8% in Millennials, and 8.0% in Generation X.

Across all three generations, the responses «I don't know» and «I do not feel anything» accounted for approximately 1% or less of responses. Additionally, these options were mutually exclusive and could not be selected along with other responses.

Table 4. *Emotions experienced while playing by generation*

Emotions	Generation Z (12-27)	Millennials (28-43)	Generation X (44-59)	Total
Relaxed and free from stress	456 / 69.0%	397 / 71.5%	59 / 67.0%	912 / 69.9%

Excited and energized	379 / 57.3%	285 / 51.4%	35 / 39.8%	699 / 53.6%
Focused and mentally stimulated	419 / 63.4%	361 / 65.0%	51 / 58.0%	831 / 63.7%
Powerful and invincible	137 / 20.7%	71 / 12.8%	7 / 8.0%	215 / 16.5%
Frustrated or anxious	82 / 12.4%	39 / 7.0%	4 / 4.5%	125 / 9.6%
Happy or satisfied	276 / 41.8%	224 / 40.4%	31 / 35.2%	531 / 40.7%
Immersed in another world	291 / 44.0%	237 / 42.7%	21 / 23.9%	549 / 42.1%
Socially connected with others	107 / 16.2%	89 / 16.0%	7 / 8.0%	203 / 15.6%
Competitive and ambitious	234 / 35.4%	180 / 32.4%	22/ 25%	436 / 33.4%
Isolated or disconnected from the real world	136 / 20.6%	97 / 17.5%	8 / 9.1%	241 / 18.5%
I don't feel anything	6 / 0.9%	4 / 0.7%	0 / 0.0%	10 / 0.8%
I don't know	4 / 0.6%	2 / 0.4%	1 / 1.1%	7 / 0.5%

Source: Authors' elaboration.

The survey also explored self-perceived mental health problems associated with video game use. Overall, Table 5 shows that most participants did not perceive problems of this kind: 66.5% reported not having experienced mental health problems related to video games. This option was exclusive, meaning that participants who selected it could not choose any other response.

Among those who did report discomfort, sleep problems were the most frequently mentioned (15.7%), followed by addiction or emotional dependence on video games (7.9%), aggressiveness (7.2%), social isolation (7.0%), and anxiety (6.9%). Other effects, such as depression, self-esteem issues, or depersonalization, occurred in lower percentages.

Generational differences were also observed. Among Generation Z participants, 60.5% indicated that they had not experienced mental health problems, although this group reported the highest percentages across several indicators, particularly sleep problems (17.7%), aggressiveness (8.8%), and addiction or emotional dependence (9.5%). Among Millennials, the absence of problems was the most frequent response (70.8%); however, sleep disorders were still the main negative effect reported (14.4%), followed by mental fatigue (8.5%) and anxiety (7.0%). In Generation X, 84.1% reported not having experienced

any mental health problems. Among those who did report difficulties, sleep disorders (9.1%) and anxiety and irritability (5.7% each) were the most frequently reported, although in lower proportions than among younger generations.

Table 5. *Self-perceived mental health problems associated with video game use by generation*

Mental health	Generation Z (12-27)	Millennials (28-43)	Generation X (44-59)	Total
Self-esteem problems	28 / 4.2%	14 / 2.5%	0 / 0.0%	42 / 3.2%
Concentration problems	52 / 7.9%	16 / 2.9%	0 / 0.0%	68 / 52%
Aggressiveness	58 / 8.8%	34 / 6.1%	2 / 2.3%	94 / 72%
Depersonalization	16 / 2.4%	3 / 0.5%	0 / 0.0%	19 / 1.5%
Mental fatigue	51 / 7.7%	47 / 8.5%	1 / 1.1%	99 / 7.6%
Sleep problems	117 / 17.7%	80 / 14.4%	8 / 9.1%	205 / 15.7%
Addiction or emotional dependence on video games	63 / 9.5%	38 / 6.8%	2 / 2.3%	103 / 7.9%
Anxiety	46 / 7.0%	39 / 7.0%	5 / 5.7%	90 / 6.9%
Irritability	34 / 5.1%	30 / 5.4%	5 / 5.7%	69 / 5.3%
Social isolation	51 / 7.7%	38 / 6.8%	2 / 23%	91 / 7.0%
Depression	23 / 3.5%	12 / 2.2%	1 / 1.1%	36 / 2.8%
Hallucinations	10 / 1.5%	2 / 0.4%	0 / 0.0%	12 / 0.9%
Eating disorders	15 / 2.3%	3 / 0.5%	1 / 1.1%	19 / 1.5%
I have not experienced mental health problems related to video games.	400 / 60.5%	393 / 70.8%	74 / 84.1%	867 / 66.5%

Source: Authors' elaboration.

According to Table 6, 55.8% of participants reported not having experienced physical health problems associated with video game use. Among those who did report discomfort, the most frequent issues were pain or discomfort in the hands and wrists (33.4%), eye strain or vision problems (22.2%), and postural problems (19.2%). Less frequently reported issues included headaches or migraines (14.3%), general fatigue or exhaustion (9.4%), and overweight or obesity (5.3%).

On a generation basis, Generation Z and Millennials showed similar patterns. In both groups, discomfort in the hands and wrists was the most frequently reported problem (35.4% and 32.4%, respectively), followed by eye

strain (24.5% and 20.7%) and postural problems (22.4% and 17.1%). Furthermore, more than half reported not having experienced any physical health problems: 52.3% among Generation Z participants and 57.5% among Millennials. This option was exclusive, meaning that participants who selected it could not choose other responses.

In contrast, Generation X showed a lower prevalence of physical discomfort overall. Pain in the hands and wrists remained the most frequently reported problem (25.0%), while eye strain (14.8%), postural problems (9.1%), and headaches or migraines (9.1%) came up less frequently than in all the other generations. Likewise, 70.5% stated that they had not experienced any physical health problems associated with gaming.

Table 6. *Self-perceived physical health problems associated with the use of video games by generation*

Physical health	Generation Z (12-27)	Millennials (28-43)	Generation X (44-59)	Total
Eye strain or eyesight problems	162 / 24.5%	115 / 20.7%	13 / 14.8%	290 / 22.2%
Pain or discomfort in the hands and wrists	234 / 35.4%	180 / 32.4%	22 / 25.0%	436 / 33.4%
Postural problems	148 / 22.4%	95 / 17.1%	8 / 9.1%	251 / 19.2%
Headaches or migraines	103 / 15.6%	76 / 13.7%	8 / 9.1%	187 / 14.3%
Fatigue or general exhaustion	70 / 10.6%	47 / 8.5%	5 / 5.7%	122 / 9.4%
Overweight or obesity	28 / 4.2%	40 / 7.2%	1 / 1.1%	69 / 5.3%
I have not experienced physical health problems related to playing video games	346 / 52.3%	319 / 57.5%	62 / 70.5%	727 / 55.8%

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Table 7 shows the importance of video games in the lives of the participating Latin American players. Overall, the main reason why video games were considered important was their ability to help participants relieve stress and forget daily worries (61.0%). This was followed by their value as a source of inspiration and creativity (28.5%) and the fact that they occupy a central part of participants' leisure time (25.6%). Other frequently mentioned reasons included improving cognitive and coordination skills (22.9%) and the idea that

the importance of video games varies depending on participants' mood or personal circumstances (22.3%). In contrast, generating significant income through video games was marginal (2.1%). Since this was a multiple-choice question, the above percentages are not mutually exclusive.

From a generational standpoint, Generation Z and Millennials showed similar patterns. In both groups, stress relief was the most frequently reported reason (61.7% and 61.1%, respectively), followed by inspiration and creativity, which had greater prominence among Generation Z participants (32.4%) than among Millennials (26.7%). The difference emerged in the third most common reason: among Generation Z participants, the centrality of video games in leisure time stood out (30.9%), whereas among Millennials, greater relevance was attributed to improving cognitive and problem-solving skills (22.0%).

Generation X showed a different pattern. Although stress relief remained the main reason (55.7%), the second most frequent response was that video games did not occupy a particularly relevant place in participants' lives (21.6%), followed by their usefulness for improving skills such as decision-making, problem-solving, and coordination (19.3%).

Table 7. *Importance of video games according to generation*

Importance	Generation Z (12-27)	Millennials (28-43)	Generation X (44-59)	Total
Video games are important because I dedicate much of my free time to them.	204 / 30.9%	117 / 21.1%	13 / 14.8%	334 / 25.6%
Video games are important because they help me relieve stress and forget daily worries.	408 / 61.7%	339 / 61.1%	49 / 55.7%	796 / 61.0%
Video games are important because they generate significant income for me.	10 / 1.5%	17 / 3.1%	1 / 1.1%	28 / 2.1%
Video games are important because they allow me to stay connected and share experiences with friends or family.	132 / 20.0%	101 / 18.2%	12 / 13.6%	245 / 18.8%
Video games are important because they help me improve	160 / 24.2%	122 / 22.0%	17 / 19.3%	299 / 22.9%

skills such as decision-making, problem-solving, and coordination.				
Video games are important because they are a source of inspiration and creativity.	214 / 32.4%	148 / 26.7%	10 / 11.4%	372 / 28.5%
Video games are important because of their educational value and their role in learning and exploring new concepts.	89 / 13.5%	70 / 12.6%	4 / 4.5%	163 / 12.5%
The importance of video games in my life changes depending on my mood or personal situation.	154 / 23.3%	121 / 21.8%	16 / 18.2%	291 / 22.3%
I play video games, but they are not an important part of my life.	63 / 9.5%	74 / 13.3%	19 / 21.6%	156 / 12.0%
Other	4 / 0.6%	5 / 0.9%	0 / 0.0%	9 / 0.7%

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Overall, Table 8 shows that the most frequently reported reasons for preserving video games were nostalgia and historical value, both at 65.6%. These were followed by the recognition of video games as art and narrative (55.6%) and their role as inspiration for the development of new games (52.1%).

By generation, Generation Z and Millennials shared the same three main reasons, although in a different order. Among Generation Z participants, nostalgia was the salient reason (67.5%), followed by historical value (65.4%) and the recognition of video games as art and narrative (59.8%). Among Millennials, historical value ranked first (67.7%), followed by nostalgia (64.5%) and the recognition of video games as art and narrative (55.1%).

In Generation X, nostalgia (58.0%) and historical value (53.4%) were also the main reasons reported. Third place was shared by inspiration for new video games (31.8%) and ensuring the availability of video games for future generations (31.8%). In this group, the recognition of video games as art and narrative showed lower percentages (27.3%) than among Generation Z and Millennials.

Table 8. *Reasons for preserving video games according to generation*

Preservation and reflection	Generation Z (12 - 27)	Millennials (28-43)	Generation X (44 - 59)	Total
Historical value: understanding how video games have evolved.	432 / 65.4%	376 / 67.7%	47 / 53.4%	855 / 65.6%
Educational purposes: useful for learning about game design and programming.	250 / 37.8%	206 / 37.1%	26 / 29.5%	482 / 37.0%
Inspiration for new video games: Inspiring future creators.	385 / 58.2%	266 / 47.9%	28 / 31.8%	679 / 52.1%
Nostalgia: video games have personal emotional meaning.	446 / 67.5%	358 / 64.5%	51 / 58.0%	855 / 65.6%
Art and narrative: preserving unique artistic styles and narratives	395 / 59.8%	306 / 55.1%	24 / 27.3%	725 / 55.6%
Future availability: ensuring that future generations can enjoy them.	318 / 48.1%	258 / 46.5%	28 / 31.8%	604 / 46.3%
Cultural and social reflection: showing what society and culture were like in a particular period.	266 / 40.2%	242 / 43.6%	19 / 21.6%	527 / 40.4%
I do not see their importance / I do not think preservation is necessary.	12 / 1.8%	8 / 1.4%	3 / 3.4%	23 / 1.8%
I don't know / I'm not sure.	28 / 4.2%	16 / 2.9%	4 / 4.5%	48 / 3.7%
Other	0 / 0.0%	0 / 0.0%	0 / 0.0%	0 / 0.0%

Source: Authors' elaboration.

8. Discussion

This article aimed to describe and compare, in a sample of video game players in Latin America, (a) weekly gaming intensity (reported hours), (b) motivations for playing, (c) emotions associated with gameplay, (d) self-perceived impacts on physical and mental health, and (e) the personal importance and reasons for

cultural preservation attributed to video games, discussing the findings in light of debates surrounding games as a service (GaaS) and dynamics of retention and prolonged engagement (Nieborg, 2016; Hamari *et al.,* 2020).

From a comparative perspective, video game consumption showed relatively stable patterns across generations, with similar routines both during weekdays and weekends. The concentration of gaming hours on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays suggests that this practice is largely organized around available leisure time. However, when comparing the group with the highest gaming time to the group with the lowest, a clear difference emerges: Generation Z reported, on average, approximately five more gaming hours per week than Generation X (Table 2). Although this gap does not necessarily imply radically different practices in quantitative terms, it does indicate a greater presence of video games in the daily lives of younger players.

At the same time, the progressive decrease in gaming time across generations points to a gradual relationship with time spent gaming rather than to a clear generational divide. Likewise, the relatively similar averages across generations support the interpretation of gaming as a cross-generational everyday practice, present at different stages of the life cycle rather than being exclusively associated with younger players, as suggested by Treviño & Cobos (2025b).

This difference becomes more significant when connected to motivations, emotions, and self-perceived health impacts, since Generation Z not only reported spending more time gaming but also showed a greater emotional centrality from gaming and a higher frequency of negative emotions and physical discomfort. In dialogue with the literature on retention-oriented design and GaaS models, these patterns may be interpreted as reflecting greater exposure to prolonged engagement dynamics, without necessarily implying a clinical diagnosis, given that gaming time alone does not constitute a sufficient indicator of problematic use (WHO, 2020; Petry *et al.,* 2015; Ferguson *et al.,* 2011; Przybylski & Weinstein, 2019).

Beyond differences in gaming intensity, the results show clear patterns of continuity in the ways video games are experienced and given meaning across generations. In all groups, the predominant motivations are organized around intrinsic components of gaming, such as challenge, the exploration of worlds and narratives, aesthetic enjoyment, and stress relief, which are mainly associated with states of relaxation, concentration or mental stimulation, and emotional activation during gameplay (Tables 3, 4, and 7).

However, generational nuances reveal that younger groups combine challenge with a greater interest in narrative and aesthetic experiences, whereas Generation X appears to prioritize challenge and escapism over narrative experience. Previous research with Millennial gamers has also shown that challenge, narrative, exploration, and relaxation are part of different forms of enjoyment associated with gaming experiences (Corona, 2018; Treviño, 2026).

These findings are consistent with self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), since enjoyment of challenge may be related to the need for competence, while the exploration of worlds and narratives is associated with experiences of autonomy and immersion. Likewise, escapism may be understood as a form of emotional regulation and disconnection from everyday stress. This consistency suggests that the recurrence of gaming is not explained solely by retention logics inherent to contemporary game design, but also by the subjective and rewarding value that players attribute to the experience (Ryan & Przybylski, 2006; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Nieborg, 2016; Hamari *et al.,* 2020).

These results may also be interpreted in light of the concept of flow, since concentration, immersion, and enjoyment emerge as central dimensions of the gaming experience, particularly among younger groups. In this sense, video games do not function solely as entertainment, but also as practices linked to emotional engagement and the organization of everyday time.

Regarding well-being, most participants did not perceive significant negative impacts on their mental or physical health, and the reported discomforts were mainly concentrated in effects associated with the act of gaming itself, such as discomfort in the hands and wrists, visual fatigue, or postural strain (Tables 5 and 6). This finding reinforces the idea that gaming is integrated into everyday life in a largely non-problematic way for most participants. However, the higher reports of sleep problems, aggressiveness, and perceived dependency among Generation Z participants may be interpreted in relation to their greater emotional activation and the more frequent presence of states of tension or frustration.

This relationship should be approached with caution. The data allow for the observation of descriptive associations between gaming hours, emotions, and self-perceived health, but do not permit the establishment of causality or the formulation of clinical diagnoses. Likewise, the reported physical discomforts mainly refer to self-perceptions associated with the practice itself, such as posture, visual exposure, or the use of hands and wrists, rather than clinically verified long-term conditions.

In terms of physical health, the greater prevalence of discomfort among Generation Z participants appears to reflect a higher intensity of common gaming-related instances of discomfort rather than qualitatively different problems compared to those reported by other generations. In contrast, the higher proportion of Generation X participants who reported not experiencing physical problems suggests a more moderate relationship with gaming.

Finally, the widespread appreciation of cultural preservation, especially regarding nostalgia, historical value, and medium continuity, reinforces the understanding of video games as a cultural practice with memory and meaning that transcends generations (Jenkins, 2006; Cote, 2020; Treviño & Cobos, 2025a, 2025b). Generational differences also emerged in this dimension: Generation Z appeared to maintain a more affective connection with preservation, Millennials emphasized a more historical and contextual understanding of the medium, and Generation X showed a more pragmatic orientation focused on continuity and the future availability of video games. These differences are consistent with the findings related to emotions, gaming time, and personal centrality, where video games occupy a more significant place in everyday life, and they also tend to acquire greater affective, aesthetic, and memorial density.

9. Conclusions

This study provides a descriptive characterization of video gaming in Latin America from a generational perspective and contributes to discussions on gaming practices, motivations, emotions, and perceptions of well-being in Latin American contexts that remain comparatively underexplored empirically. The results show age-related differences, particularly in gaming intensity, emotional centrality, and perceived discomfort; however, these differences do not constitute a sharp separation between generations. Overall, video games emerge as an everyday, emotional, recreational, and culturally significant practice, shaped not only by contemporary dynamics of retention and prolonged engagement, but also by subjective motivations, uses associated with relaxation and disconnection, experiences of enjoyment, and values linked to cultural memory.

Due to the non-probabilistic and voluntary nature of the sample, these findings should be understood as descriptive tendencies within the participating group rather than as results generalizable to the broader population of Latin American video game players. As a future line of research, it would be valuable to complement these findings with probabilistic or qualitative studies that lead to a deeper understanding of forms of engagement, conditions of

use, and sociocultural and access-related differences among Latin American video game players.

Ethics and Transparency

Acknowledgments

To the Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar (Colombia) for the support provided to the doctoral stay that allowed this research to be carried out. The authors also thank Eduardo Castro Morales, certified official translator, for editing the English-language version of this manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

Financing

Own resources.

Author Contributions

Function	Author 1	Author 2	Author 3	Author 4
Conceptualization	X	X		
Data curation	X	X		
Formal analysis	X	X		
Funding acquisition	NA	NA		
Research	X	X		
Methodology	X	X		
Project administration	X	X		
Resources	X	X		
Software	X	X		
Supervision	X	X		
Validation	X	X		
Visualization	X	X		
Writing – original draft	X	X		
Writing – review and editing	X	X		

Data Availability Statement

Available upon request.

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