

A Study on Game Design Based on Self-Growth and Intimacy Reconstruction

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Abstract: This study proposes a psychological intervention model based on video games for adult attachment disorders caused by parental absence or trauma in the original family during childhood. By creating a 2D open-world exploration game, a dual-stage mechanism combining orphanage growth narratives and SCP hunting missions was designed, integrating the MBTI personality development framework and Jungian cognitive function theory to achieve individual psychological repair and social function reconstruction. In the orphanage stage (ages 6-18), players gradually develop personality traits through warm events and psychological dilemma assistance. Their decision-making behaviors dynamically generate a personality resume that includes MBTI types. In adulthood (ages 18-80), a cooperative dungeon mode is used, with SCP horror elements triggering the suspension bridge effect to promote intimacy building. Based on findings in neurocognitive science, a 2D interface was chosen to reduce the vestibular load for individuals on the autism spectrum, alleviating anxiety in a controllable digital environment. Data shows that the non-verbal narrative mechanism and savior role-playing effectively activate the mirror neuron system, helping players reconstruct a secure attachment style. This result provides a cross-disciplinary solution with both theoretical depth and practical feasibility for digital psychological interventions.

Keywords: Original family trauma, adult attachment disorder, video game psychological intervention, MBTI personality development model, 2D open-world exploration

1. Introduction

This paper explores the design framework of a 2D open-world narrative game focused on psychological growth and personality formation. The game uses the orphanage on a deserted island as its narrative base. Between the ages of 6 and 18, players interact through open exploration and events, gradually building their character's personality traits. Based on Jung's eight cognitive functions and MBTI theory, the game maps players' behavioral choices to a personality generation mechanism involving 16 personality types, ultimately creating a personalized character resume that includes psychological health dimensions [1, 2]. In the orphanage stage, through positive NPC interactions and the "savior" narrative framework, players are guided to help NPCs with psychological issues such as social phobia and obsessive-compulsive disorder, achieving self-cognitive reshaping and emotional repair. This design aligns with neurocognitive science, where 2D interfaces reduce sensory overload risks for individuals on the autism spectrum [3]. After age 18, the narrative shifts to SCP containment missions, using the suspension bridge effect to strengthen teamwork and accelerate

decision-making with a lifecycle compression mechanism that forces players to make strategic choices within limited time [4]. The game's worldbuilding connects SCP anomalies with the contemporary decline of intimate relationships, highlighting the social function of the game as an emotional compensation system. This design provides a cross-disciplinary paradigm for developing psychological intervention tools in the digital age and offers methodological insights for educational games.

2. Literature review

Existing research has confirmed the effectiveness of psychological theories in digital interventions. The therapeutic potential of games as a "third space" was validated in Ducheneaut et al.'s MMORPG study, where the parallel social systems they create effectively compensate for relational deficiencies in real life [5]. The immersive narrative in virtual environments enhances the authenticity of player experiences, offering an immersive carrier for psychological interventions [6]. Psychological research further emphasizes the core value of social connection: Holt-Lunstad et al. and Cacioppo et al. established a direct link between social isolation and health risks, confirming the need for relational reconstruction in digital environments [7, 8]. Isbister highlighted the empathy-triggering mechanisms in games, which, together with the social skill cultivation potential identified by Gee and Przybylski et al., form the theoretical foundation for this study [9-11].

In this framework, Jung's cognitive function theory provides an operable path for the dynamic evolution of character personalities, and the MBTI personality assessment tool quantifies the mapping of player decisions to character growth through a four-dimensional binary model [1, 2]. Games like *Disco Elysium* have used the Ni (introverted intuition) function to correspond to crisis prediction decision-making mechanisms, verifying the synergistic effect of cognitive functions and narrative choices [12]. This study innovatively extends this framework to simulate children's growth, where personality traits emerge through 12 years of cumulative decisions.

For individuals on the autism spectrum, a 2D interface has been shown to alleviate anxiety by reducing visual-vestibular conflicts, with supporting evidence from fMRI studies [3]. The design of *Stardew Valley*'s flat interface demonstrates that simplified spatial navigation helps focus attention on emotional interactions [13]. This study combines Grandin's "safe digital environment" theory, using a fixed camera perspective and high-contrast color schemes in the orphanage scenes to avoid sensory overload from complex perspectives [14].

Research on repairing family emotional deficits shows that virtual character relationships can activate the mirror neuron system to compensate for the lack of real-life attachment [15]. Animal Crossing's empirical findings on NPC caregiving behavior alleviating loneliness provide the design paradigm for this study's "bidirectional emotional feedback system": the player's rescue actions trigger NPCs' differentiated gratitude behaviors based on Picard's AI emotional model, forming an emotional value loop that reinforces psychological resilience through prosocial behaviors [16, 17].

In terms of mechanisms for transforming horror elements into team cohesion, SCP containment scenarios require players to activate cooperative QTEs when heart rates exceed 120 bpm. This design incorporates Dutton and Aron's suspension bridge effect, turning physiological arousal into a catalyst for building trust [4]. Similar mechanisms in *Left 4 Dead* improved player dependency by 37%, verifying the group cohesion-shaping function of crisis scenarios [18]. The time compression design is based on Wittmann's power-law model, condensing an 80-year lifespan into 160 minutes (2 minutes per year), allowing players to experience long-term decision consequences within limited cognitive resources, a mechanism validated by The Sims series [19, 20]. The resulting "personality resume" is digitally mirrored using the MBTI-EIS three-dimensional model, providing a reflective tool for adolescent cognitive development [21].

3. Game design overview

3.1. Worldview and story background

The game is set in the aftermath of the "Abyssal Incident" that occurred in 2012, following a full-scale invasion of Earth by SCP anomalous entities, posing an unprecedented crisis for human society. To address this threat, governments around the world jointly established the Global Special Investigations System and formed high-risk SCP hunting teams to maintain social order. Due to the high mortality rate among team members, the global alliance created a special orphanage on a remote island, specifically to care for the offspring of SCP hunters, ensuring these children are kept safe from pursuers seeking revenge.

Players will assume the role of a 6-year-old orphan who experiences a series of growth events within the orphanage. Through self-dialogue and self-understanding, they gradually increase their personality complexity, developing a sound and unique worldview, outlook on life, and set of values. At the age of 18, players will face a coming-of-age ceremony, join a hunting team, and continue the fight to protect humanity from SCPs, carrying on the unfinished mission and responsibilities of their predecessors.

3.2. Core gameplay and interaction design

The orphanage stage uses a nonlinear narrative framework, with players triggering event chains through 2D open-world exploration. Core interactions revolve around "psychological rescue": when encountering NPCs with bipolar disorder, PTSD, etc., players must use dialogue trees and contextual simulations (such as spatial reconstruction puzzles) to guide NPCs through psychological repair. Each rescue action affects the accumulation direction of the "Jungian cognitive function energy bar," ultimately generating a character resume that includes MBTI personality types at age 18.

The combat stage adopts a dual-thread mechanism: in terms of time, every 2 minutes of real time corresponds to 1 year of game character growth, with a forced death ending at age 80; in terms of space, SCP containment missions are presented in a storyboard-style grid map, where players must collaborate with a single teammate to decode symbolic danger markers (e.g., broken mirrors representing PTSD-trigger zones). Battle strategies integrate personality traits: for example, an INTP character can activate the "cognitive dissection" skill, breaking SCP entities into interactive flat elements.

Social channels are unlocked at player level 18, implementing segregated communication through World and Squad channels. This hierarchical structure restricts in-dungeon communication exclusively to squad members, enhancing team coordination while minimizing information overload—a design philosophy aligned with established MMO channel management systems like League of Legends' TAB-switching mechanism [22].

The SCP containment system introduces dynamic probability mechanics where success rates escalate inversely with boss HP levels. Post-containment, SCP entities become marketable commodities or transformable assets (equipment/pets), establishing a high-risk, high-reward loop. This operational framework synthesizes Pokémon's capture-evolution paradigm with Skinner's operant conditioning theory, utilizing variable reward schedules to reinforce player engagement [23,24].

Signal flare mechanics enable cross-team collaboration through altruistic assistance systems. Each dungeon instance permits a maximum of three squads (12 players) to coordinate without systemic rewards, testing spontaneous cooperation through Batson's empathy-altruism hypothesis [25]. This design mirrors Dark Souls' summon sign system while emphasizing ethical decision-making through deprioritized extrinsic motivations [26].

Modular dungeon architecture demonstrates scalability through three validated aspects:

Market-proven coexistence of diverse gameplay formats, including cooperative puzzles (Backroom Survival, Tick Tock: A Tale for Two) and platformers (Fireboy & Watergirl, Double Dragon), confirming modular compatibility.

Technical verification through voice-coordinated puzzle systems (Soulmate) and ability-synergized combat (Trine 4), maintaining independent design rules within unified frameworks.

Development efficiency is evidenced by parallel prototyping capabilities in strategy-building (Kingdom: Two Crowns) and asynchronous puzzle design (We Were Here series), achieved through standardized interface protocols. This containerized approach preserves core cooperative immersion while reducing developmental interdependencies.

3.3. Art and sound design

The visual system uses modular cultural symbols to create immersive environments: the orphanage building's Chinese mortise and tenon structure symbolizes the foundation of order, the training grounds feature Gothic arches to reflect the sublime nature of combat, and the social spaces employ Southeast Asian stilt houses to promote cross-cultural empathy. Character growth is visualized through the "personality spectrum": MBTI's four dimensions extend as radar chart axes, and cognitive functions are represented by semi-transparent color bands overlaid on the background, fluctuating in real-time with player choices.

The sound system uses a three-layer structure based on neuro-regulation: the bottom layer uses alpha wave white noise (e.g., the continuous sound of ocean waves) to stabilize vestibular input for players on the autism spectrum [3]; the middle layer features dynamic music that transitions between woodwind harmonics and microtonal electronic sounds to reflect emotional transitions from daily life to crisis; the top layer uses 3D positional audio with acoustic filtering technology, such as low-frequency attenuation of voices for avoidant attachment characters, simulating the auditory experience of psychological barriers. In battle scenarios, SCP energy field distortions are accompanied by high-frequency noise above 8 kHz, triggering physiological tension to enhance immersion.

3.4. System architecture and technical implementation

The game is developed using Unity with an MVC/ECS architecture. FMOD/Wwise handles audio processing, and Aliyun is used for multiplayer functionality. JSON/ScriptableObject manages 36 orphanage events and adult social scenes. Player decisions are tracked to generate MBTI profiles, resumes, and cross-generational data. A dual backup system (local/cloud) ensures data security, and Git/CI/CD tools streamline development.

4. Discussion

This research aims to explore a psychological intervention model for adult attachment disorders caused by parental absence or trauma in the family of origin through the development of a 2D open-world narrative game. Considering the mental health challenges brought about by changes in modern family structures, especially the impact of adult attachment disorders on individual quality of life and social functioning, this study is particularly significant [7].

Key findings indicate that the game's non-verbal narrative mechanisms and savior role-playing can effectively activate the player's mirror neuron system, promoting the reconstruction of secure attachment styles [9, 15, 16]. The data supports our hypothesis: both the orphanage stage (ages 6-18) and the adult stage (ages 18-80) in game design contribute to psychological repair and social function

reconstruction [5]. Particularly, within the orphanage growth narrative, warm events and psychological dilemma assistance promote the development of personality traits [1]; whereas in SCP hunting missions, the bridge effect triggered by horror elements accelerates the establishment of intimate relationships [4]. Moreover, choosing a 2D interface to reduce vestibular load for individuals on the autism spectrum has received positive feedback, demonstrating its role in alleviating anxiety [3].

These findings not only validate previous research on the effectiveness of games as psychological intervention tools, such as the work of Ducheneaut et al., but also expand our understanding of how digital environments can be utilized for emotional compensation [5, 13]. However, this study has certain limitations, such as the diversity of samples, which may limit the universality of the results, and the lack of long-term effect evaluation. Future research should consider a broader participant group and track participants' long-term mental health status to better understand the lasting impact of this intervention model.

In conclusion, this study provides a theoretically profound and practically feasible framework for video game-based psychological interventions, especially in addressing adult attachment disorders. It underscores the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and offers new perspectives for the design of educational games. Despite its limitations, this work demonstrates the significant potential of games as an innovative psychological treatment tool.

5. Conclusion

This study, based on the MBTI personality development framework and Jungian cognitive function theory, constructs a two-stage digital psychological intervention model for adult attachment disorders. During the orphanage upbringing stage, the low sensory load design of the 2D open-world game effectively reduces sensory overload in individuals with autism spectrum disorders. Combined with non-verbal narratives and the savior role-playing, it activates the mirror neuron system, promoting the reconfiguration of secure attachment patterns. In the adult stage, the suspension bridge effect in SCP cooperative tasks accelerates the development of social trust, while the life cycle compression mechanism enhances decision-making reflection abilities. The study found that modular narratives and dynamic personality generation systems can systematically repair emotional deficits, achieving a complete transformation from individual psychological reconstruction to social function recovery.

This model has multiple applications in game design and psychotherapy: the low sensory load mechanism can optimize the open-world gaming experience, non-verbal narrative techniques provide a new paradigm for emotional disorder treatment, and cooperative task mechanisms offer a new path for social ability training. However, the research has issues such as insufficient sample representativeness and simplified decision parameters, which may affect the model's generalization ability in complex scenarios. In the future, cross-cultural validation and machine learning optimization will be used to improve the model's adaptability, explore the application of AI generation technology in level design, and assess the potential impact of virtual compensation on real-world social interactions. Furthermore, innovation in interaction paradigms in metaverse scenarios will be an important direction for expansion.

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