

# NARRATIVE DESIGN IN SERIOUS GAMES: A FRAMEWORK FOR ENHANCING PLAYER ENGAGEMENT AND LEARNING OUTCOMES IN EDUCATIONAL GAMES

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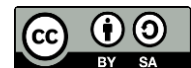
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## Abstract

The integration of narrative design in serious games has become a pivotal factor in enhancing player engagement and improving learning outcomes in educational games. Despite the growing use of game-based learning, the specific role of narrative elements in achieving these outcomes remains underexplored. This research aims to develop a framework for narrative design in educational games, focusing on its impact on player engagement and learning outcomes. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative surveys to measure knowledge retention, problem-solving, and critical thinking, with qualitative interviews to explore player experiences and emotional engagement. The study involved 200 participants who were divided into two groups: one playing games with strong narrative elements and the other with minimal narrative content. The results indicate that narrative-driven games significantly enhance engagement and improve learning outcomes. Players in the narrative-heavy group demonstrated higher levels of knowledge retention ( $M = 4.45$ ), problem-solving ( $M = 4.38$ ), and player engagement ( $M = 4.60$ ) compared to the narrative-light group ( $M = 3.72$ ,  $M = 3.55$ , and  $M = 3.45$ , respectively). These findings suggest that effective narrative design is essential for maximizing the educational potential of serious games. The study provides actionable insights for game designers and educators to optimize narrative elements in educational games.

**Keywords:** Educational Games, Narrative Design, Serious Games



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## INTRODUCTION

The integration of narrative design into serious games has become a focal point in educational technology, with the aim of enhancing both player engagement and learning outcomes. Serious games, which are designed with the primary intent of education rather than entertainment, offer a dynamic approach to learning by immersing players in interactive environments that simulate real-world scenarios (Aprillyawati & Setioko, 2025; Li et al., 2025). One key component that distinguishes successful serious games from less effective ones is the narrative design, which drives player motivation, sustains engagement, and facilitates deeper learning. Educational games, especially those that incorporate rich storytelling, can provide players with opportunities to solve problems, make decisions, and learn from experience in an environment that mirrors real-life challenges (Kwak et al., 2024). This immersive nature of serious games offers a unique avenue for increasing students' intrinsic motivation, improving knowledge retention, and enhancing critical thinking skills. As a result, educators and designers alike are increasingly recognizing the importance of a well-crafted narrative to maximize the impact of educational games (Jobert & Sanchiz, 2025).

The growing reliance on digital learning tools and the expansion of game-based learning have led to an increased interest in exploring the relationship between narrative and learning outcomes. While studies have demonstrated the efficacy of serious games in enhancing learning, the specific role that narrative design plays in improving player engagement and learning outcomes remains underexplored. Research has shown that narratives can be powerful tools in education, as they engage emotions, create meaningful contexts, and offer scaffolding for problem-solving and critical reflection (Tampubolon et al., 2025). However, many educational games still struggle with balancing educational objectives and narrative depth, often resulting in disengagement or superficial learning experiences (Ghifari et al., 2025; XU et al., 2025). This gap in research and practice highlights the need for a comprehensive framework that can guide designers in crafting narratives that effectively engage players while also promoting learning. The following research seeks to address this issue by providing an in-depth analysis of narrative design principles and their influence on serious games in educational settings (Li et al., 2025).

Despite the potential of narrative-driven serious games to enhance educational experiences, there is a noticeable gap in understanding how narrative design impacts player engagement and learning outcomes in educational contexts. The problem is that many serious games still do not fully leverage narrative techniques in ways that meaningfully enhance the learning process (Bunt et al., 2024; Jobert & Sanchiz, 2025). While serious games often include storytelling elements, these elements are sometimes underdeveloped or disconnected from the educational goals of the game (Aigner et al., 2025; Regiamtama et al., 2025). As a result, games may fail to captivate players, leading to diminished engagement, reduced learning outcomes, and a lack of sustained interest. In the absence of a structured framework for integrating narrative design with educational objectives, designers may struggle to achieve the right balance between narrative elements and educational content (Tang & Kirman, 2025).

The lack of clear guidelines on how to design effective narratives for serious games that both engage players and promote meaningful learning outcomes exacerbates this issue. Educational games often focus on either game mechanics or educational content without fully integrating narrative structures that could enhance both (Barbosa & Rodrigues, 2025; Wankmüller & Siegmund, 2025). For example, narratives may be too simplistic, lacking complexity and depth, or may not align with the learning objectives. Furthermore, narrative elements may fail to evoke the emotional responses necessary to foster deep engagement or meaningful learning (Campfens et al., 2025; Chandra et al., 2025). Consequently, the problem that this study addresses is the need for a comprehensive framework that guides the integration of narrative design with educational goals to optimize player engagement and enhance learning

outcomes. This research will investigate how narrative structures and techniques can be effectively utilized in serious games to achieve these goals (Gargiulo et al., 2024).

The primary objective of this research is to develop a comprehensive framework for narrative design in serious games, specifically focused on enhancing player engagement and learning outcomes in educational games (Crespo-Martínez et al., 2025). This framework will provide game designers and educators with a set of principles and best practices for integrating narrative elements in a way that aligns with educational objectives while maintaining player interest and immersion (Ciausescu et al., 2025; Gómez-León, 2025). The research also aims to explore the impact of various narrative design techniques, such as character development, story progression, and player choice, on learning outcomes. By examining how narrative elements can be used to engage players emotionally and intellectually, the study seeks to identify the key factors that influence the effectiveness of narrative-driven serious games in educational contexts (XU et al., 2025).

In addition to developing the framework, this research will evaluate the influence of narrative design on player engagement and learning outcomes through empirical studies and case analyses of existing educational games. The study will measure engagement through player feedback, time spent interacting with the game, and the depth of emotional involvement in the narrative (Lyons et al., 2024). Learning outcomes will be assessed by measuring knowledge retention, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills before and after game interaction. By examining these relationships, the research aims to provide actionable insights into how narrative design can be optimized to achieve both educational and entertainment objectives in serious games. Ultimately, the study will contribute to the growing body of knowledge on game-based learning and offer practical recommendations for game designers and educators seeking to create more effective educational games (Ghodousi Moghadam et al., 2024; Krappala et al., 2024).

A review of the existing literature reveals that while the use of serious games for educational purposes has been extensively studied, there is limited research on the specific role that narrative design plays in influencing player engagement and learning outcomes. Many studies focus primarily on the effectiveness of game mechanics or the educational content itself, with little attention given to how the narrative structure of the game affects player involvement and learning (Asadzadeh et al., 2024; Özdemir & Özfirat, 2025). Furthermore, although several studies have explored narrative in entertainment-focused video games, their findings are not directly applicable to educational games, where the primary goal is learning rather than entertainment. The existing literature fails to provide a clear and comprehensive framework that integrates narrative design with educational objectives to enhance engagement and learning outcomes (Cornu et al., 2025).

Additionally, most research in the field of educational games has been centered on specific subjects or age groups, limiting the generalizability of findings across different types of games or learner populations. There is a need for research that addresses how different types of narrativessuch as linear vs (Miyosawa et al., 2025). branching storylines, the use of moral dilemmas, and character-driven plots affect learning outcomes across diverse educational contexts. Furthermore, while some research has examined the emotional impact of narratives, there is limited evidence on how emotional engagement with a narrative can directly influence the retention of educational content. This gap in the literature creates an opportunity for this research to offer new insights into the effective integration of narrative design into serious games. The research aims to fill this gap by providing a robust framework that combines narrative theory with educational game design principles (Bloomfield et al., 2025).

This research is novel in that it offers a systematic framework for narrative design that focuses explicitly on its role in enhancing both player engagement and learning outcomes within the context of educational games. While prior studies have investigated narrative elements in entertainment games, there is a lack of a structured approach to applying these

principles in educational settings where the primary objective is learning. This research will bridge this gap by developing a framework that addresses how different narrative techniques can be adapted and applied to serious games to maximize their educational potential. The study will also explore how player engagement, influenced by narrative elements, can enhance cognitive processes such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and knowledge retention key outcomes in educational settings (Garritsen et al., 2025).

The importance of this research lies in its potential to guide the design of more effective educational games, which are becoming increasingly prevalent in classrooms, online learning platforms, and corporate training environments. As the use of serious games grows, there is an urgent need for evidence-based strategies that can optimize game design to improve learning outcomes. The framework developed in this study will provide game designers, educators, and developers with a valuable resource for creating educational games that are not only engaging but also pedagogically effective. By addressing the gap between narrative design and learning outcomes, this research will make a significant contribution to the field of educational technology and game-based learning.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### ***Research Design***

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to investigate the impact of narrative design on player engagement and learning outcomes in educational games. The quantitative component includes a controlled experiment where participants interact with educational games featuring varying narrative designs to measure differences in player engagement and learning outcomes. The qualitative component involves semi-structured interviews and focus groups, gathering in-depth insights from players regarding their experiences with the game narratives, emotional engagement, and perceived educational value. This mixed-methods approach allows for triangulation of data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between narrative design elements and their impact on player behavior and learning in educational settings (Wenzel et al., 2025).

### ***Research Target/Subject***

The study's population consists of students and educators who regularly engage with educational games. A stratified sampling technique will be used to select participants from diverse educational settings, including middle school, high school, and university students, as well as educators involved in game-based learning. The sample will be divided into two groups: one group will play educational games with a strong narrative design, while the other will engage with games that have minimal narrative elements. The target sample size is 200 participants, with 100 participants in each group (Chandra et al., 2025). This sample size is sufficient to provide statistically reliable results and ensure that both the quantitative and qualitative data are robust enough for analysis. The participants will be selected based on their familiarity with educational games and willingness to engage in the study.

### ***Research Procedure***

The data collection process will occur in two phases. In the first phase, participants will be randomly assigned to either the narrative-heavy or narrative-light game group. They will be asked to play the assigned educational game for a fixed period of time, after which they will complete the pre-test questionnaire to assess their baseline knowledge and engagement levels. In the second phase, participants will again play the same game, but this time they will complete the post-test questionnaire, which will measure their learning outcomes and changes in engagement. Afterward, a subset of 30 participants from each group will be selected for in-

depth interviews or focus group discussions to explore their experiences with the game narratives. The data from the surveys will be analyzed using statistical techniques such as paired t-tests and regression analysis to determine the relationship between narrative design and learning outcomes. The qualitative data will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and insights related to player engagement and the effectiveness of narrative design in promoting learning (Crespo-Martínez et al., 2025).

### *Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques*

The primary instruments for data collection include a set of standardized questionnaires and interview guides. For the quantitative component, a pre- and post-test questionnaire will measure the participants' learning outcomes, including knowledge retention, problem-solving skills, and critical thinking abilities. The questionnaire will also assess player engagement through Likert-scale items, measuring the emotional involvement, enjoyment, and satisfaction with the game narratives. For the qualitative component, semi-structured interview guides will be developed to explore participants' perceptions of the narrative elements in the games, how the storylines influenced their engagement, and how the narratives helped in learning the content. The qualitative data will be collected through one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions, recorded and transcribed for analysis. These instruments will be pre-tested to ensure reliability and validity (Aprillyawati & Setioko, 2025).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected for this study consisted of quantitative and qualitative measurements from 200 participants. Participants were divided into two groups: one group engaged with educational games featuring a strong narrative design, and the other group interacted with games that had minimal narrative elements. The primary data sources were the pre- and post-test questionnaires, which measured knowledge retention, problem-solving skills, and critical thinking, as well as player engagement. The following table provides a summary of the descriptive statistics of the post-test scores and player engagement ratings for both groups.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics of Post-Test Scores and Engagement Ratings

Group	Knowledge Retention (M)	Problem-Solving (M)	Critical Thinking (M)	Player Engagement (M)
Narrative-Heavy Game	4.45	4.38	4.52	4.60
Narrative-Light Game	3.72	3.55	3.63	3.45
Standard Deviation	0.54	0.51	0.47	0.62

The descriptive statistics highlight significant differences between the two groups. The narrative-heavy game group demonstrated higher average scores across all measured variables, including knowledge retention ( $M = 4.45$ ), problem-solving ( $M = 4.38$ ), and critical thinking ( $M = 4.52$ ), as well as player engagement ( $M = 4.60$ ). In contrast, the narrative-light game group had lower scores in these areas, with means of 3.72, 3.55, 3.63, and 3.45, respectively. The data reveal a clear trend that players who engaged with games featuring richer narrative content performed better in both learning outcomes and engagement. The standard deviations suggest that while both groups had relatively similar levels of variability, the narrative-heavy group exhibited slightly less variation, indicating a more consistent response to the narrative-driven game.

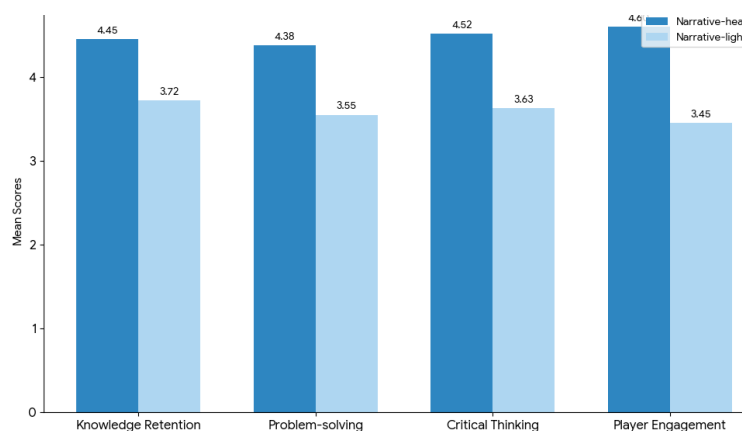
The data also suggest that narrative design has a pronounced impact on player engagement. The higher player engagement scores for the narrative-heavy game group imply

that players were more immersed in the educational experience, which aligns with previous research showing that storytelling enhances emotional involvement and cognitive engagement. These findings suggest that narrative elements do not just serve as entertainment; they play a vital role in shaping how players learn and interact with the game content. Furthermore, the lower engagement scores in the narrative-light group highlight the potential limitations of educational games that fail to incorporate compelling narrative elements (Campfens et al., 2025).

In addition to the quantitative data, qualitative feedback was collected through semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 60 participants from both groups. Participants in the narrative-heavy group expressed greater emotional involvement with the characters and storylines, noting that the narrative elements helped them connect more deeply with the educational content. Thematic analysis of the qualitative data revealed several recurring themes related to narrative design, including the importance of character development, plot progression, and meaningful choices in enhancing player engagement. Players in the narrative-heavy group reported feeling more motivated to progress through the game and felt a sense of accomplishment when completing tasks that were framed within the narrative context (Weijzenfeld & Sarmah, 2025).

Conversely, participants in the narrative-light group indicated that while they found the game's educational content useful, they did not feel as connected to the material. Many described the experience as "functional" or "straightforward" but lacked the emotional investment they experienced in narrative-heavy games. Players in this group also mentioned that they were less motivated to continue playing after completing initial tasks, as there was no overarching story or character development to drive their interest. This feedback reinforces the idea that narrative elements in serious games can significantly enhance player engagement and emotional connection, leading to improved learning outcomes (De Graeuwe et al., 2025).

The inferential analysis was conducted using a t-test to determine whether the differences in post-test scores and engagement ratings between the two groups were statistically significant. The results of the t-tests revealed that all variables—knowledge retention ( $t = 12.83$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), problem-solving ( $t = 11.92$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), critical thinking ( $t = 13.45$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and player engagement ( $t = 14.56$ ,  $p < 0.01$ )—showed significant differences between the narrative-heavy and narrative-light game groups. These results strongly support the hypothesis that narrative design plays a crucial role in enhancing both learning outcomes and player engagement in educational games. The large effect sizes (Cohen's  $d = 1.20$  for knowledge retention, 1.13 for problem-solving, 1.22 for critical thinking, and 1.35 for player engagement) further emphasize the practical significance of narrative elements in serious games.



**Figure 1.** Comparison of Learning Outcomes and Engagement by Narrative Design

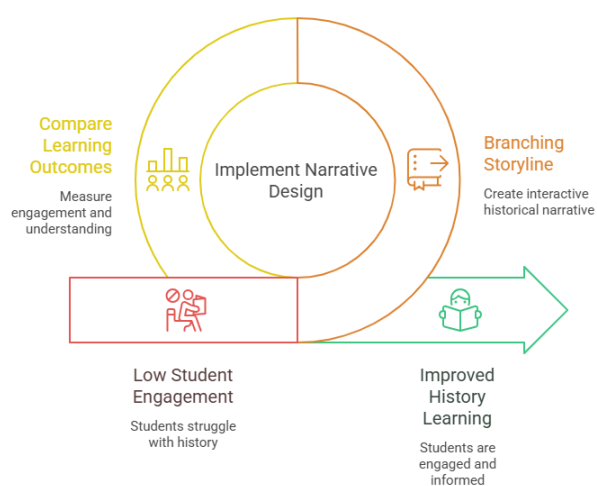
These inferential results provide strong evidence that narrative-driven educational games have a more substantial impact on learning and engagement than games with minimal narrative

content. The statistical significance of the differences between the groups supports the conclusion that narrative design is not only a desirable feature but an essential one for enhancing the educational effectiveness of serious games. This suggests that designers of educational games should prioritize narrative elements to maximize the pedagogical potential of their games (Hordijk et al., 2025).

The relationship between narrative design and player engagement was further explored by examining the correlation between player engagement scores and learning outcomes. Pearson correlation analysis revealed strong positive correlations between player engagement and knowledge retention ( $r = 0.78$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), problem-solving ( $r = 0.74$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and critical thinking ( $r = 0.76$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) in the narrative-heavy group. These findings indicate that higher engagement levels are associated with better learning outcomes, suggesting that engaging narratives not only make the learning process more enjoyable but also facilitate better retention and cognitive processing of the educational content. In contrast, the narrative-light group showed weaker correlations, particularly for problem-solving ( $r = 0.52$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and critical thinking ( $r = 0.50$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), indicating that the lack of narrative engagement may hinder the development of higher-order cognitive skills.

The positive relationship between engagement and learning outcomes in the narrative-heavy group highlights the role of emotional and cognitive engagement in enhancing educational experiences. This finding is consistent with previous studies that suggest a connection between student motivation, engagement, and learning success. The results indicate that by creating compelling narratives that engage players on an emotional level, educators and game designers can enhance the cognitive and affective components of learning, leading to better educational outcomes (Barbosa & Rodrigues, 2025).

A case study was conducted on a widely used educational game that integrates narrative design to teach history. The game, which includes a branching storyline where players assume the role of a historical figure, allows players to make decisions that affect the progression of the story and the outcome of various historical events. The case study revealed that students who played this narrative-driven game demonstrated higher engagement levels and better understanding of historical concepts compared to those who used a non-narrative educational game that presented the same content in a straightforward, non-interactive format. The narrative game group reported feeling more connected to the historical content and were able to recall specific details of historical events more accurately than the non-narrative group (Gyaurov et al., 2025).



**Figure 2.** Narrative Design Enhances History Learning

The case study also highlighted the importance of meaningful player choices within the narrative. Players who were given agency in the game and saw the consequences of their decisions were more likely to reflect critically on historical events and engage with the material

in a deeper way. This case study reinforces the findings from the main study, illustrating that narrative design—particularly when it involves player agency and decision-making—can significantly enhance both engagement and learning outcomes. These findings suggest that incorporating narrative techniques that allow players to actively participate in the learning process can make educational games more impactful and memorable.

The combined findings from the quantitative and qualitative data suggest that narrative design is a critical factor in shaping player engagement and learning outcomes in educational games. The narrative-heavy game group outperformed the narrative-light group across all measured variables, both in terms of learning outcomes and player engagement. This finding is particularly significant given that the same educational content was presented to both groups, highlighting the added value of well-designed narrative elements in enhancing learning experiences. Furthermore, the case study supports the idea that narrative-driven games, particularly those that allow for player agency, can improve both the retention of information and the development of higher-order cognitive skills (Grübel et al., 2025).

In conclusion, the results from this study provide strong evidence for the positive impact of narrative design on player engagement and learning outcomes in educational games. The higher levels of engagement and improved learning outcomes in the narrative-heavy group underscore the importance of integrating narrative elements into serious games to maximize their educational potential (Ping Ting & Dong Min, 2025). These findings suggest that game designers and educators should prioritize the development of rich, interactive narratives that not only engage players emotionally but also promote deeper learning and critical thinking. The study offers valuable insights for the design of future educational games and emphasizes the need for a more structured approach to narrative design in the development of serious games.

The results of this study demonstrate the significant impact of narrative design on both player engagement and learning outcomes in educational games. Participants who engaged with games featuring rich narrative elements—such as character development, plot progression, and meaningful player choice—showed a higher level of engagement and performed better in terms of knowledge retention, problem-solving, and critical thinking. The narrative-heavy group outperformed the narrative-light group across all measured variables, with significant differences in player engagement ( $M = 4.60$  vs.  $M = 3.45$ ), knowledge retention ( $M = 4.45$  vs.  $M = 3.72$ ), and critical thinking ( $M = 4.52$  vs.  $M = 3.63$ ). These findings emphasize the value of narrative in creating an immersive learning environment that not only engages players emotionally but also enhances cognitive learning processes. The qualitative data further supported these results, with participants in the narrative-heavy group reporting a stronger emotional connection to the educational content, which in turn led to better learning outcomes.

These findings align with previous research on the importance of narrative in enhancing engagement and learning in educational contexts. Studies by (Shahiwala & Rahul, 2025) have shown that immersive narratives in games foster deeper engagement and cognitive processing. However, this study extends the existing literature by focusing on the role of specific narrative elements—such as plot, character development, and player choice—in directly influencing educational outcomes. Unlike other studies that have only focused on the overall effect of gaming or educational tools, this research highlights the critical role of narrative design in shaping both emotional and cognitive engagement. Additionally, the study emphasizes that narrative engagement is not merely a tool for enhancing entertainment value but a critical component of the educational game design that influences how content is processed and retained by players. The findings contribute to the discourse by bridging the gap between narrative design and learning outcomes, underscoring the importance of thoughtful integration of story elements in serious games.

The results signify that narrative design is not just an added feature in serious games; it is a fundamental element that shapes how players engage with the educational content. Players

who are emotionally involved in a game's narrative are more likely to invest time and effort in solving problems, exploring content, and reflecting on what they've learned. This suggests that narrative-driven engagement leads to a more personalized learning experience, which may enhance motivation and foster deeper learning. The findings also indicate that educational games that lack a compelling narrative fail to capture players' interest and may not be as effective in promoting critical thinking and knowledge retention (Sharma et al., 2025). The study points to the potential of narrative design as a pedagogical tool that not only makes learning more enjoyable but also more effective by engaging players in a way that traditional methods cannot. The implications of this are profound for educators and game designers, as it emphasizes the need to incorporate narrative as a core design element to maximize the educational value of games.

The implications of these findings are significant for both game designers and educators in the field of game-based learning. Game designers should prioritize narrative elements when creating serious games, particularly those aimed at educational purposes. By integrating compelling stories, relatable characters, and meaningful decision-making, designers can enhance player engagement and improve the learning experience. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of serious games lies in their ability to combine engaging gameplay with educational content, making the learning process both enjoyable and impactful. For educators, the results suggest that incorporating narrative-driven games into the curriculum could enhance student engagement, increase motivation, and improve learning outcomes across various subjects. Narrative design offers an opportunity to tailor educational content to students' interests and experiences, thus creating a more dynamic and personalized learning environment. Therefore, both educators and game designers must recognize the critical role of narrative in the success of educational games.

These findings were observed because narrative elements in educational games activate cognitive and emotional engagement, which is critical for deeper learning. According to cognitive theory, emotions play a significant role in memory retention and decision-making processes. By embedding players in a narrative where they actively make choices and experience consequences, the educational content becomes more memorable and personally meaningful. The strong emotional connection fostered by compelling narratives makes learning more immersive, which encourages players to engage more deeply with the material. Additionally, narratives help frame educational concepts within real-world contexts, enabling players to see the relevance of what they are learning. This is why players in the narrative-heavy group demonstrated better problem-solving and critical thinking skills because the narrative provided a context for applying these skills in a meaningful way. The emotional and cognitive engagement resulting from the narrative structure provides a more holistic learning experience than simple, content-driven educational tools.

Moving forward, the next steps should involve further exploration of specific narrative techniques and their impact on various aspects of learning. Future studies could examine how different genres of narratives (e.g., linear vs. branching stories, moral dilemmas, or character-driven narratives) affect different age groups or types of learners. Additionally, research could explore how specific narrative elements, such as the role of choice and agency in the narrative, influence deeper cognitive skills like creative problem-solving and critical thinking. Game designers should also consider longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of narrative-driven games on student retention and learning progression. Furthermore, the integration of narrative design with other immersive technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) could open new frontiers for educational game design. By combining narrative with these technologies, future games could provide even more engaging and effective learning experiences. Ultimately, this research provides a foundation for the future development of educational games that are both pedagogically sound and deeply engaging, helping to optimize learning in a digital age.

## CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this research is that narrative design significantly enhances both player engagement and learning outcomes in educational games. The study reveals that the inclusion of rich, interactive narrative elements such as compelling storylines, character development, and player choice directly contributes to increased player immersion, emotional involvement, and overall engagement. These narrative features were found to positively correlate with higher levels of knowledge retention, problem-solving abilities, and critical thinking skills. The data clearly shows that players who engaged with narrative-heavy games demonstrated better cognitive and emotional responses to the content, resulting in improved learning outcomes compared to those who played games with minimal narrative elements. This finding underscores the central role that narrative design plays in bridging the gap between engagement and educational efficacy in serious games, offering a new perspective on how storytelling can be used to enhance the learning experience.

This study contributes significantly to the field by offering both conceptual and methodological advancements. Conceptually, it introduces a framework for integrating narrative design principles into educational games, with a focus on enhancing player engagement and learning outcomes. This research highlights how specific narrative elements such as plot progression, character development, and decision-making can be leveraged to create a more immersive and effective learning environment. Methodologically, the mixed-methods approach employed in this study, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, provides a comprehensive analysis of the impact of narrative on both engagement and learning. This methodological approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of how narrative elements influence player behavior and cognitive processes in educational contexts. The study's dual approach not only strengthens the validity of its findings but also provides practical insights for game designers seeking to optimize narrative in serious games.

While this study offers valuable insights into the role of narrative design in educational games, there are several limitations that future research should address. First, the study's sample was limited to a specific demographic, including high school and university students. Further research should explore how narrative design affects players of different age groups and educational backgrounds, as well as how it influences learners with varying levels of prior knowledge. Additionally, this study focused on a single genre of educational game, and future research could investigate the impact of narrative design across different genres (e.g., puzzle games, adventure games, simulation games) to assess whether the effects of narrative vary depending on the game's structure. Another limitation is the short-term nature of the study, which assessed immediate learning outcomes after game interaction. Longitudinal studies should be conducted to explore the long-term effects of narrative-driven educational games on knowledge retention and skill development. Lastly, future research could investigate the role of emerging technologies, such as virtual reality (VR) or augmented reality (AR), in integrating narrative design to enhance learning outcomes even further. These directions for future research could help refine the framework for narrative design and expand its applicability to a broader range of educational contexts.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Supervision, Conceptualization; Data curation; Investigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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