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The Psycho-Social Impact of Video Games on Young People

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Abstract

This research article offers a thorough analysis of both the positive and negative effects of video games on young people's psycho-social development. Although there are worries about the growing market for games that emphasize bad themes like crime and violence, it is important to think about the advantages and disadvantages of gaming. According to recent studies, playing styles and the company of friends may have a greater impact on young people's wellbeing than the games they play. The research review focuses on the beneficial psycho-social effects of video games, including relationships, engagement, mental health, self-acceptance, optimism, resilience, and general functioning. Particularly prosocial games have the power to encourage both short-term and long-term prosocial behavior. On the other hand, detrimental effects are also highlighted, such as how excessive gaming may result in disregarding other vital facets of life, poor judgment, depressed symptoms, and social isolation. Overall, this study highlights how critical it is to take into account both the benefits and drawbacks of video games, as well as the importance of game content, social connections, and individual traits. In order to fully comprehend the psycho-social effects that video games have on young people, a balanced approach is needed that takes into account the variety of gaming-related experiences and results.

Keywords: Gen z, Online gaming, E sports, social developement

Introduction

Nowadays, people of all ages, particularly youngsters and teenagers, spend more time indoors playing computer games than they do outside. Despite the fact that some video games are educational, there is a rising market for games that emphasize negative themes such as violence, crime, and contempt for the law and authoritative officials. As a result, there are concerns regarding how various digital gaming genres may affect a child's psycho-social development. Even those who may not regularly play video games have certain relationships and associations with the video gaming world and its community. The average human brain is not thought to be fully matured until the age of 25. Certain themes in video games are more likely to influence younger children. Indeed, video games have been extensively researched as potential causes of aggressive behavior, emotional difficulties such as sadness and anxiety, hyperactivity, and inattention. On the other side, cooperative games have also been linked to some advantages. Long-term gaming has been linked to increased addictive behavior and poor mental health. As a result, parental monitoring of the quantity of time spent playing video games as well as the types of games played will be critical in preventing addictive behavior and internalizing disorders in children. Many of the gamers experience depression as a result of their gaming activities. The more you play, the more likely it is that you will neglect other elements of your life. For instance, they neglect healthy practices like exercise and diet and

have fewer social connections. Video games are frequently used by gamers to treat their depressive symptoms. They use gaming as an outlet and a coping mechanism for their depression. But ultimately, playing video games doesn't help their sadness; it just makes it worse.

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature study is to examine how video games affect young people's lives. The majority of psychologists' studies on the impacts of "gaming" have concentrated on the negative aspects, such as possible injury from violence, addiction, and depression. However, the majority of them also contend that a more balanced viewpoint is required, one that takes into account both the advantages and potential drawbacks of playing these games. Recent studies indicate that the way young people play and the people they play with may be more significant to their well being than the games they play. During lockdown, there has been a growth in the prevalence of technology usage in teenagers and children, which has either a favorable or bad impact on their life. According to studies, a lot of people have used video games to assist them get through challenging life experiences. Other research, however, suggests that gaming might have had negative impacts.

Bell V (2015), it's crucial to take into account these possible advantages in part because the nature of these games has drastically altered over the past 10 years, becoming more complicated, diverse, realistic, and social in nature. Video games may benefit young people's emotional, social, and psychological health, according to existing evidence. Video games have been demonstrated to have a favourable impact on young people's emotional state, sense of competence, self-acceptance, optimism, energy, resilience, engagement, relationships, and functioning. For example, puzzle video games like Tetris, which have minimal cognitive burdens and often short time demands, can have a good influence on the players' mood by eliciting happy emotions and relaxation. It will assist them in adapting to new systems with flexibility and without irritation and fear. Despite numerous studies finding a link between violent video games and aggressive behaviour, little attention has been paid to the potential repercussions of prosocial games. In theory, nonviolent games in which game characters help and encourage one another should promote both short-term and long-term prosocial conduct. Despite being a risk factor for mental illness, video games have been shown to alleviate sadness and anxiety while increasing creativity, abilities, and cognition in youth.[1]

Anderson (2009), it has been stated that in order to devote more time to computer games, players may neglect sleep, eating, hobbies, exercise, and socialising. Excessive computer gaming has been linked to poor judgement, depressed symptoms, and suicidal ideation. The notion that internet use and video games may impair the brain, emotions, and behaviour has also been supported by Oxford. Even when the player characters aid other players by eliminating shared opponents, violent video games were not regarded as prosocial. Social isolation, increased aggression, and unfavourable academic and vocational repercussions are the most typical physical and psychosocial outcomes of online video gaming. People with a variety of intra- and interpersonal risk factors could be drawn to playing video games as a coping mechanism for personal issues. Gaming and the pursuit of gaming-related pleasures can cause people to overlook 'regular' relationships, obligations at work or school, and even basic physical necessities. Thus, it is possible to think of computer gaming as a continuum that ranges from a fun hobby to a compulsive and even addictive use.[2]

Granic (2014), numerous studies have been conducted to study the potential of various video games, both commercial and non-commercial, primarily in relation to the cognitive skills of seniors. For example, it has been discovered that playing complicated strategic video games helps improve cognitive flexibility, particularly in elderly persons. Furthermore, in healthy older individuals, playing a commercial computer cognitive training programme results in considerable improvements in visuospatial working memory, visuospatial learning, and focused attention.[3]

Johnson (2013), In response to concerns about the potential negative effects of video games on the mental health of young individuals, and considering the emerging evidence highlighting positive impacts, the Gaming Research Group from the Young and Well CRC has compiled a comprehensive report. This report focuses on the current state of research linking video game play to the flourishing mental health of young people. It delves into the role of video games in the lives of the youth, emphasizing how technology can be leveraged to enhance mental health and overall well-being. The aim is to foster a deeper understanding of the positive intersection between gaming and well-being. The report not only documents evidence supporting the connection between video games and positive mental health but also provides guidelines for fellow researchers in crafting tools and games specifically designed to enhance mental health and well-being among young Australians.

The available evidence indicates that video games can have a beneficial impact on the well-being of young individuals. Existing research highlights the contribution of video games to the emotional, social, and psychological well-being of the youth. Specifically, video games have been demonstrated to positively affect various aspects, including emotional state, self-esteem, optimism, vitality, resilience, engagement, relationships, sense of competence, self-acceptance, and social connections and functioning. Recent studies suggest that the manner in which young people play and the individuals they play with might be more crucial for well-being than the specific games they engage with. Further research is necessary to explore key questions, such as the moderating influence of personal characteristics on the relationship between video games and well-being. Additionally, extending existing research by replicating findings across different game types, demographic samples, and play environments is essential for a more comprehensive understanding of the subject.[4]

Limone (2021), The global impact of COVID-19 has disrupted normal life worldwide, leading to the widespread adoption of social distancing measures and eventual lockdowns. Consequently, there has been a significant surge in the use of technology for both professional and entertainment purposes. The rise in technology usage, particularly among adolescents and children during lockdowns, has left a discernible impact on their lives, with outcomes varying between positive and negative aspects. The documented increase in technology usage in children overall is approximately 15%, with smartphones constituting a predominant 61.7% of this prevalence.

Concerns have been raised about the potential compromise of neuroplasticity in nerves, leading to disturbances in brain functioning due to increased technology use. Specifically, there is uncertainty about the impact of radiofrequency (RF) radiations emitted from smartphones, with some considering it a potential risk factor for brain tumors in children. The heightened usage of technology is believed to affect brain function, potentially compromising sleep, cognitive abilities, and contributing to the development of mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, Alzheimer's disease, and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Despite being identified as a potential threat to mental health, video games have

demonstrated positive effects, including a reduction in depression and anxiety, as well as enhancements in creativity, skills, and cognition among children. The overall impact of increased technology usage on the mental development of adolescents and children hinges on the specific trends and patterns of use. Therefore, it is crucial for parents to closely monitor their children's mental health and behavior during these challenging times of the pandemic.[5]

Ferrari (2018), While numerous commendable reviews and meta-analyses have explored the impact of video game training as a tool to enhance well-being, a majority of them have specifically concentrated on the effects of digital games on brain plasticity or cognitive decline in children and seniors. Notably, the existing research has primarily focused on these age groups. Conversely, there is a scarcity of meta-analyses that center on the adult population, with only one such analysis identified. This particular meta-analysis is limited to examining the effects of training with a specific genre of games, namely action video games, on cognitive skills among healthy adults.
To address this gap, the objective of this systematic review was to identify research evidence pertaining to the impact of video game training on cognitive skills (including processing and reaction times, memory, task-switching/multitasking, and mental spatial rotation) as well as emotional skills in the healthy adult population. The aim is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the potential effects of video game training on various cognitive and emotional domains in adults.[6]

Frank W (2018), Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD) is a serious condition associated with significant personal and social impairment. However, the understanding of IGD is complex and not fully defined. In this review, we examined the scientific literature on IGD, focusing on key aspects such as definitions, symptoms, prevalence, and causes. The systematic review encompassed databases like ERIC, PsyARTICLES, PsycINFO, PSYNDEX, and PubMed, covering the period from January 1991 to August 2016. We also considered secondary references to ensure a comprehensive analysis.
The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) provides a foundational definition for diagnosing IGD. However, it comes with certain drawbacks. The development of IGD involves a combination of internal factors, including issues with self-perception, mood regulation, reward processing, and decision-making, as well as external factors like family background and social skills. Moreover, specific factors related to gaming itself can contribute to the development of IGD. In summarizing the existing knowledge on the causes of IGD, we propose an integrated model that elucidates the intricate interplay between internal and external factors contributing to the disorder. This model aims to provide a more holistic understanding of the etiology of Internet Gaming Disorder.[7]

Johnathan (2012), The online environment has become a significant aspect of daily life for many individuals, prompting researchers to delve into the complex nature of human interactions with the Internet. Massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs), with their global popularity and distinctive design features, have become a focal point of investigation. Discussions surrounding these games suggest a dual impact on gamer health, encompassing both positive and negative aspects. The aim of this paper was to critically assess the research literature to ascertain whether playing MMORPGs affects the psychosocial well-being of adolescents and young adults.
To achieve this, initial searches were conducted on nine databases spanning the years 2002 to 2012, using keywords such as online gaming, internet gaming, psychosocial, and well-being. Additionally, hand

searching was employed, leading to the identification of six studies that met the inclusion and exclusion criteria for this review. The results from these studies revealed a strong association between MMORPG playing and both beneficial and detrimental impacts on the psychosocial well-being of the populations under study. However, due to the methodologies employed in these studies, only tentative conclusions can be drawn.

In conclusion, the reported effects of MMORPG playing on psychosocial well-being are varied, encompassing both positive and negative outcomes. Given this diversity, the paper recommends further multidisciplinary research to delve into the clinical implications and therapeutic potentialities of this modern and growing phenomenon.[8]

Shoshani (2021), This cross-sectional study investigated the distinct connections between attachment patterns, empathy, and the engagement of children and adolescents in aggressive, prosocial, and interpersonal video game play, along with their impact on peer relations. The sample comprised 1391 Israeli individuals aged 9–15, who self-reported their recent video game activities in terms of violent, prosocial, and interpersonal interactions. The study also assessed dispositional attachment styles, empathy, social satisfaction, prosociality, peer support, subjective well-being, and aggressive behavior in daily life. The results affirmed the relationships among video game involvement, social functioning, and overall well-being. Prosocial and interpersonal video game play correlated with higher social satisfaction, peer support, and prosocial behavior, contributing to increased well-being. In contrast, violent video game play was associated with elevated instances of school bullying, lower social satisfaction, and reduced pro sociality. Secure attachment was linked to heightened empathic concerns and increased levels of prosocial and interpersonal interactions during video game use. Children displaying attachment anxiety or avoidance tended to engage in significantly less prosocial video game behavior.

These findings challenge the presumption that violence in video games inevitably leads to negative social consequences. Instead, they highlight the potential for video games to address fundamental attachment and prosocial needs, fostering positive relationships and well-being.[9]

Barbara Mullan (2010), Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs) have often grabbed headlines, especially in cases where gamers have faced fatal outcomes due to excessive play. While extreme cases have gained attention, more prevalent physical and psychosocial effects linked to online video gaming include social isolation, heightened aggression, and negative impacts on academic and occupational performance. Recognizing the potential bias in reporting predominantly negative consequences of video gaming, a systematic review aimed to objectively assess the evidence regarding the effects of MMOGs on players.

In the analysis of sixteen studies meeting the inclusion criteria, the findings indicated that significant negative consequences were primarily observed in players classified as "addicted" or engaging in "problematic game play." However, a considerable number of gamers reported positive aspects of video gaming, such as enjoyment, feelings of achievement, friendship, and a sense of community. It is noteworthy that the studies had notable limitations, emphasizing the necessity for further research. This gap in understanding calls for additional investigations to facilitate the development of appropriate treatments and interventions for individuals facing problematic game play.[10]

Discussion & Findings

Video games have developed into intricate universes with deep stories and interactive elements where players are frequently free to choose different actions that might lead to drastically different gaming experiences. As a result, players can use the same game to spy on and murder adversaries, remove rivals, save the lives of rivals, trade weapons and strategies, and show collaboration and teamwork, especially when they play in teams or groups. Video games have gotten more realistic, vivid, compelling, and violent over time, and the public and scholars have grown increasingly concerned about the negative effects they may have on the emotional states and behaviour of children and teenagers. Numerous studies have demonstrated that kids and teenagers who play more violent video games eventually exhibit increased violence, including delinquency, bullying behaviour, and engaging in physical altercations.

Conclusion

It has been observed that prosocial and interpersonal video game play is associated with higher levels of social satisfaction, peer support, and prosocial behavior, leading to higher levels of well-being. On the other hand, violent video game play is associated with higher levels of school bullying and lower levels of social satisfaction and prosociality. Children who avoided or experienced attachment anxiety played video games with much fewer prosocial behaviours. It is difficult to fully understand the social consequences of video games on children and teenagers without a broad-based study that considers both the positive and negative aspects of the issue. Open-ended tales loosely frame virtual social environments, where users are largely free to act anyway, they like as long as they adhere to the game's rules. Users can kill ogres, save friends, barter products, besiege castles, or forge ties of friendship.

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