

Video Games Don't Change The Way We Behave In The Real World

Posted on March 25, 2019

Introduction

Technology has taken over our lives and become a crucial part of our daily activities, which has led to our dependence and addiction to technologically advanced devices that are introduced with time. Smartphones and personal computers have become our source of knowledge, entertainment, communication, and connection with the rest of the world. Similarly, [video games](#) are the new form of sports and entertainment for children and young adults. According to research conducted by Douglas Gentile of Iowa State University in 2009, 8.5 percent of children between the ages of 8-18 in the United States are addicted to gaming. With the modern development in video gaming, the number of people who play video games in the United States has increased to 155 million in 2016 (Gentile).

Video games are very similar to movies and films that have a background story and an imaginary situation that almost seems real. The player takes the form of a character in that scripted video game, where he further controls how his chosen character performs at every level and proceeds to the next. Most video games are related to a state of war and violence, where the player is encouraged to use weapons and other tools to protect himself or complete his mission by killing others. The concept of these video games might sound dark and negative, but they are far from reality, and video game players are able to differentiate between real-life situations and video games (Carnagey 489-496).

More Read: [□□□□□](#)

However, violent video games are blamed for corrupting the minds of their players and affecting their behavior in real life, apart from their virtual existence in video games. Most parents and other adults in society are concerned about the games their loved ones play most of the time during their day. The addition of video games has affected the performance of its players in real life, such as in academics and work. The desire to play further has increased the procrastinating period for young children and students, who could be doing more productive activities such as playing real sports, which benefits their health, or working on their projects and assignments and improving academically.

Despite the many negative impacts of video games on the real-life performance of the player, they have little to no influence on how they behave and act. To be more specific, violent video games are not the reason behind increased violence among teenagers and young adults, mass shootings at schools, or different unexpected occasions. An act of terrorism is entirely associated with mental instability, previous criminal activities, and the pure intentions of doing evil and hurting others.

Discussion

Video games are often criticized by adults who associate them with negative impacts on the productivity of the players at their workplace or academic performance. According to a study by the Palo Alto Medical Foundation, most video players are comparatively hyperactive and might get themselves into fights; however, violent video gaming is not related to violent behavior among teenagers or young adults. In fact, researchers have discovered that people who play video games and take out their mental frustration on virtual platforms are less likely to be aggressive in real life and are reported to be more organized and well-mannered (Norcia).

Parkland Shooting

On February 14th, 2018, the students of Parkland, Florida, were scarred for life, and the whole nation was shaken when a mass shooting occurred at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. The nineteen-year-old assassin, Nikolas Cruz, killed seventeen people and wounded seventeen more. He was charged for his actions accordingly. The incident was unexpected and unprepared. The police could not create a reason behind the violent activity. However, it was reported that several threats had been received by the Sheriff's office in 2016 and 2017 regarding the motives of the teenager. No investigation was carried out when the local FBI was informed of Nikolas Cruz's intentions of becoming a school shooter.

Many politicians and public speakers commented on the incident, including the President of the United States, Donald Trump, and Kentucky's governor, Matt Bevin, who connected the mass shooting with violence in video games. Trump claimed that there is excessive violence shown in video games that are shaping the thoughts of young and naïve people. The concept of killing someone and slaughtering innocent people is very common in violent video games, which has made it acceptable for teenagers and young adults. The President further emphasized on a rating system for video games, similar to movies.

However, violent video games can't be blamed entirely. While there are studies showing minor behavioral changes among children who play video games and those who don't, there is no evidence that children develop their personalities after video gaming and being a part of a violent game. There is a possibility that people who play violent video games are already attracted to violent activities and are mentally unstable. Video games can also provide a platform for such people to perform their urge for violence virtually on their screens rather than actually hurting someone.

The Misconception Of Video Games

Video games are easily associated with any form of unproductivity of children, and their misbehavior is related to the kind of material they see on their screens. The concept can be relevant to some

extent due to the studies showing behavioral changes in children and teenagers regarding their hyper-activism and decrease in helpful and caring nature. However, a study by researchers from the University of York has found that violence shown in video games does not prime or prepare video gamers for real-life violence or encourage any such activity. The research study included more than three thousand participants who were active video gamers but showed no sign of increased aggressive behavior or the desire to implement video gaming activity in real life.

The contrary argument is that the increase in the realism of video games might confuse players in identifying between real-life situations and video gaming activities. The environment created in violent video games that encouraged activities such as manslaughter and physical abuse in “Grand Theft Auto,” where the player steals away people’s vehicles and kills innocent people, might affect the mindset and thought process of video gamers. Such activities are considered normal and accepted, which can contribute to juvenile delinquency among minors (Zendle 113-125).

However, the theory was rejected by various models and experiments where video gamer participants acted similarly to non-video gamers. Dr. Zendle, one of the researchers at the University of York, concluded in his study that graphics realism had no relevance to the thought set of players. It was the human factor added to the characters in video games that added reality to these games, yet video gamers have shown no sign of confusion between the real world and virtual situations (Zendle 21-29).

Christopher J. Ferguson, from Discover Magazine, provided the evidence of decades of research on the misconception of video games and concluded, “any claims that there is consistent evidence that violent video games encourage aggression are simply false”.

He further added in his article that policymakers are quick to make statements about a rejected misconception that video games contribute to real-life violence, while they ignore the clear explanations of gun control policies, bullying, ignorance of mental instability, and early signs of the violent and aggressive behavior of the attacker are ignored (Ferguson 470-482). Aggressive behavior and mass shootings are strongly connected with mental instability and clear intentions of terrorism. Teenagers who are involved in criminal activities are not because of the video games they play but because of their experiences and being brought up in certain environments, which provokes them towards delinquency.

Further Evidence

The idea of violent video gaming’s impact on the child’s brain and his violent actions is entirely subjective and not a proven fact. While there is clearly excessive bloodshed, crimes, manslaughter, and war activities in these games, the connection between these graphics can’t be blamed for a person’s personal choice and behavior. There should be a restriction on the kind of graphics the younger generation can access because a minor is naïve to differentiate between moral and immoral acts. Nevertheless, it is crucial to shed light on the root causes of violence and the irrelevant connection with video gaming.

Policymakers, politicians, parents, and other adults in society are blaming a mere entertainment tool and hobby of young children for the violent actions that are caused by the ignorance of mental disorders and their impacts on society, neighborhoods, domestic violence, and bullying. Video games have proved to increase a child's mental performance and decision-making skills, improve work under pressure, and how they react to panic situations. Video gamers have shown signs of organized manner and better time management. While it is true that excessive gaming has reduced their academic activities and shifted their focus from the real world, leading to unhealthy habits (Tobias 216-219).

A study by Daphne Bavelier shows that children who play action video games gain the benefits of increased brain activity, quick responses, improvement in confidence, and vision enhancement (Bavelier 763). No negative behavior was noticed except for showing a less helpful nature, which cannot be blamed entirely on their gaming habits but depends on the personal experiences and personality of a child. On a similar matter, Doug Hyun Han concludes that the effects of video gaming on the behavior of a child are uncertain and entirely depend on individuals and their personalities, which they have developed prior to gaming (Han 763).

There are opinions and no evident facts that imaginary guns are a result of increased gun violence. How can we blame gun violence, which is a serious issue created by the system and societal pressures and activities on an imaginary gun, which helps take out frustration rather than encourage further violence?

Conclusion

Even though politicians and policymakers blame violent video gaming for aggressive behavior among children, teenagers, and young adults without any evidence and context, studies conducted throughout the period have rejected their claim. Researchers have proven that there is no link between violent graphics shown in video games and the child's perception, mindset, and eventual aggressive behavior.

Instead of accounting for the reasons behind the mass shooting, where innocent lives are given up the victim is both, the one assassinated and the assassin, we are playing the blame game and constantly looking for irrelevant reasons. There is clear evidence that aggressive behavior is caused by media on the whole, personal experiences, domestic violence, peer pressure, bullying, and mental disorders. It is the ignorance of society and the irresponsibility of authoritative entities that are turning a blind eye to the signs of mental instability, early aggressive behavior, accessible weapons and guns, and the lack of awareness of the legal system and its violation.

Works Cited

Andrea Norcia, M.A. (2014). The Impact of Video Games | Media Information for Parents. Retrieved from <http://www.pamf.org/parenting-teens/general/media-web/videogames.html>

Carnagey, Nicholas L., Craig A. Anderson, and Brad J. Bushman. "The effect of video game violence on physiological desensitization to real-life violence." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 43.3 (2007): 489-496.

Daphne Bavelier, C. Shawn Green, Doug Hyun Han, Perry F. Renshaw, Michael M. Merzenich and Douglas A. Gentile, Drdouglass.org. (2011). Brains on video games. Retrieved from http://www.drdouglas.org/drdpdfs/Nature_Reviews_Neuroscience_2011.pdf

Douglas Gentile, (2017). Cross-cultural study strengthens link between media violence and aggressive behavior – News Service – Iowa State University.

Ferguson, Christopher J. "Evidence for publication bias in video game violence effects literature: A meta-analytic review." *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 12.4 (2007): 470-482.

Greitemeyer, Tobias. "The spreading impact of playing violent video games on aggression." *Computers in human behavior* 80 (2018): 216-219.

Zendle, David, Daniel Kudenko, and Paul Cairns. "Behavioural realism and the activation of aggressive concepts in violent video games." *Entertainment Computing* 24 (2018): 21-29.

Zendle, David, Paul Cairns, and Daniel Kudenko. "No priming in video games." *Computers in Human Behavior* 78 (2018): 113-125.