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The Social Problems and Benefits of Video Games

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In today's society, video games have improved and increased alongside technology. Many games have made many communities increase their social media intake and gaming addiction. In the uprise of video games, multiple genres of video games have been created to contain the gamer. This paper will discuss the number of negatives and positives that affect a video gamer. We will also discuss other factors that could correlate to games involving people. The downsides and upsides of video gaming will primarily revolve around social problems that gamers develop and or positive outcomes from gaming. We will dive into the topics such as personalities produced from playing games, habits that will come through, and the satisfaction one would receive from entertaining oneself.

In an article by Jennifer Martin in 2012, *Game On: The Challenges and Benefits of Video Games*. One of the most well-known multimedia platforms today, video games have heavily influenced our growing population. The most popular genre is "first-person shooters." These allow the gamer to see where you play hostile activities from a perspective. In addition, there are multiplayer servers where the category of role-playing will kick in, allowing the user and their friends to be fully immersed in the characters they are playing. Of course, more genres of games will have different styles, but these have become the norm for many people in their lives. Video games being a huge factor of influence, it contributes to "social, cultural, and economic influence[s]" (Martin 2012). That being said, there are positive sides to gaming. Researchers had the chance to study how games are beneficial to development. In a video game, people have an opportunity to relive another identity, and this is a positive for gamers because they have developed social skills and personal growth. It is stated that video game players have more dependency than ordinary people. They form the ability to sense direction, problem-solve, and

analyze the concept of information much faster. With these skills progressing as a gamer, researchers also noted progressions within "efficiency, proficiency, and masculine performativity" (Maritn 2012). The research moves on to state lists of video games that show the effects of narrative games. An example from the article is that *Mass Effect 2* was an example of where players can discover their creativity through the linear structure and the strategies to complete the game. An additional trait would be engagement when gamers provide for the game as they play. Engagement is stated to be beneficial for cognitive progression. The mental development would be the abilities of prioritization, critical thinking, and logical reasoning. As a bonus, this will let the gamers acknowledge the primary reason why games are designed the way they are. It allows the user to have a complete range of diversity, originality, and advances (Maritn 2012).

The opposition to video games from being positive would be the habits and violent acts that potentially could influence the audience. Within *Effect of Exposure to Gun Violence in Video Games on Children's Dangerous Behavior With Real Guns* by Justin H. Chang and Brad J. Bushman in 2019 shows the downsides of video game content. The study had 220 children from 8 to 12 play video games. The video games they played had the content of gun violence, sword violence, and non-violent games. When we see the results of all gamers versus non-gamers, there is a result that shows that children who play violent games are prone to have malicious behaviors around firearms. The research keeps track of the participants by observing any aggressive behaviors. They continue to check by having a survey that measures nine components, and they would respond based on how they would behave; kicking, punching and yelling (Chang & Bushman 2019). With the additional survey measuring how their attitude is like towards firearms. In the outcome, gamers who played video games with violent content

within them would increase the percentage of people touching real guns. There are correlations between video games and social media platforms having a combination of children becoming more open to violent content. But overall, the exposure to video games that contain brutal content will become more of a norm for those exposed regularly, making them insensitive to sensitive topics.

In addition, another article speaks about the downsides of video gaming. This article discusses the stereotypes that are developed by gamers. *Playing With Prejudice: The Prevalence and Consequences of Racial Stereotypes in Video Games* by Melinda Burgess, C. R., et al. in 2011 shows statistics and numbers of games that stereotype races, minorities, and gender. For example, it is stated that the majority of the characters that did illegal activities within the games were male. The results were recorded from all types of games, with 79% of attackers and 77% of victims being males (Burgess, Melinda C. R., et al. 2019). Following this number, 71% of the attackers were Caucasian, and 65% of those victims were also Caucasian. The second group of violence that was shown from findings were Asians being only 8% used versus Caucasians being 40.5%. Finally, the research discusses the racial stereotypes where participants would be allowed to answer questions about who would look like a violent aggressor. Most Caucasian gamers picked out that Africans look like the "aggressive criminal" (Burgess, Melinda C. R., et al. 2019). In certain games, there are bad displays of women and minorities repeatedly. Games like *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* had depictions of hate crimes, such as making Cubans and Haitians the enemies within the game. Words similar to "Kill the Haitians" and "Kill the Cubans" left many exposed to hate crimes. The ending resulted in Rockstar removing these words from the game (Burgess, Melinda C. R., et al. 2019). As a result, gamers are exposed to narratives that have stereotypical pictures that could lead to many passive thoughts or preferences based on an

interaction with a game. This would make the person playing these games vulnerable to

discrimination against others compared to the average person. From the previous examples of

Grand Theft Auto: Vice City, some games portray Africans as the primary aggressor in video

games that belittle the value of their identities in real life. The study states that even though

people are playing games and paying little to no attention to the race of these enemies. There is a

massive development within the human mind where people have "hostile-aggressive" behavior

towards Africans due to the stereotypes laid within video games or social media. The stereotypes

applied within the games cannot be real and still have negative ramifications and assumptions

towards Africans within our communities.

   Correlates and Consequences of Exposure to Video Game Violence: Hostile Personality,

Empathy, and Aggressive Behavior by Bartholow, Bruce D., et al. in 2005 to 2011, discusses

how problems in our societies are progressing with the trends of video games. With high sales

reaching over 20 billion dollars, video games have surpassed other industries such as film. With

the significant impact of games rising, there are improved video settings, and the biggest hit of

games would be games with violent content. These games are then exposed to young audiences

that intake them within gameplay for 7 hours per week, ages 2 to 17 (Bartholow, Bruce D., et al.

2005-11). From studies stated within this article, there have been results that there are long-term

effects of growing aggressive behavior due to small amounts of gaming. It is noted that the

research only found the short-term impacts of gaming, but they still need further research on how

video games affect the long term. According to the multiple sources within this study, there has

been discussion that being repeatedly exposed to violent content will make gamers less sensitive

to these topics. With the gaming cycle happening regularly in gamers, this process will have a

stable progression towards aggressive behavior. These results were found from questionnaires

handed out to the participants to differentiate their *basic personality* versus *aggression* within the study (Bartholow, Bruce D., et al. 2005-11). Within the distance of looking at gender stereotypes, we have an article by Jonathan Burnay titled *Effects of Sexualized Video Games on Online Sexual Harassment* in 2019. Within this research, 211 college students played *Ultra Street Fighter IV*. It is seen the stereotype of females within these games was sexualized due to the amount of skin shown with the outfits that were given. Other traits recorded during the study were aggressiveness, passive sexism, demographic information, and longitude of gameplay. The research results found that gamers who play sexualized games will say sexist jokes toward one another. It is found that men gamers tell fewer sexist jokes than a woman. It is shown that players who have seen sexualized content within video games have an online influence to harass females. Overall, it is to create an enhanced knowledge for people to understand that online sexual harassment has been derived from factors like video games. (Burnay, Jonathan, et al. 2019).

To move things on a positive note, observe how video games can contribute to positive outcomes. Aside from "first-person shooter" games, we have games that make the player active. In *Functional Outcomes and Psychological Benefits of Active Video Games in the Rehabilitation of Lateral Ankle Sprains: A Case Report* by Arvinen-Barrow, Monna, et al. in 2020, there are findings that active video games are associated with methods of rehabilitation. These rehabilitation methods correlated with video games are mainly physical to this study. The study used is primarily patients related to lateral ankle sprains, a frequent accident in sports players. To grasp the knowledge of active video games becoming a factor in lateral ankle sprain rehabilitation, they incorporated patients with different perspectives of how they would function and their mental state. This is supposed to study how the patients usually behave. As the

equipment they had used to rehabilitate the patients, they used the XBOX 360 with the Kinect sensors with training involvement. The Kinetic sensor, in general terms, is a motion sensor that is based on game movement. With active video games being used in this study, there were "low, moderate, and advanced exercises" (Arvinen-Barrow, Monna, et al., 2020). While the patients were in rehabilitation, active video games would allow them to focus on balance rather than learning how to play the game. While in these sessions, the doctor would select the time was right to move on to the next game or difficulty level. Other factors were tied to determining foot and ankle movement, pain level, and mood. As a result of the active video games and doing the rehabilitation exercises with the games routinely, the patient could come back to playing sports earlier than expected (Arvinen-Barrow, Monna, et al., 2020).

In the span of video games, there is a mix of feelings in games. We are left to see which side we would choose. Video games significantly impact people who decide to play them but cannot always be perfect. Social aspects will be affected by video games, such as the stereotypes brought about race and gender. Though there are stereotypes that are passively embedded in the gamers' heads, it seems that it would be the final decision on how one person would be able to interpret the content. Similar to violent content being a factor to aggression, personally from a standpoint as a gamer. There are moments when everyone has a temporary rage moment; this is normal behavior for a human to release stress or anger. As again, this is for the person to choose on their individuality. One thing to note is that seeing repeated violent content will make people insensitive to sensitive topics. We have seen this in all cases, regardless of video games such as COVID-19. We have to reconsider which one will benefit us and acknowledge that there are flaws in everything, especially in online video games. While there are negatives, there are also positives to video games in people's lives. Having the ability to access rehabilitation through

active video games will tremendously help those who need aid. And for video gamers, it is

proven that they cognitively develop skills such as enhanced directional skills, the ability to scan

environments for context, and interpersonal abilities. Similar to the adverse effects of video

games, these depend on the people how they play video games and interpret the information

given to them. As a member of the video gaming community, I can fully agree to see parts of

video gamers becoming aggressive and "toxic" human beings, but we can see this in every

community; racial and gender stereotypes are true. Video games are meant for entertainment and

how the person wants to perceive the concept of the game they are playing. In the end, would

you continue to play video games if you are a gamer yourself as you read this?

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