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Violent Video Games: What actually causes aggressive behavior in adolescents?

A new subculture of media and entertainment is the videogame culture. The usage of computers has increased exponentially in the contemporary world, and relying on technology in every aspect of life is a direct outcome of this fact. As electronic sports are establishing their niche worldwide, online video gaming is also increasing in popularity (Adamus).

There has been extensive research on the impact of violent forms of media on children and adolescents. The relationship between violent forms of media and the resulting level of aggression in individuals became a scientific topic of inquiry in the late 1930s. Although the contents of many video games prove to be extremely instrumental in providing entertainment to children, some elements of the games have grown extremely violent and perturbing in their effects. Since the advancement of computing technology, increasing trends of stealth shooting and graphics mirroring hostile military strategies are deployed in many of these games. The popularity of video games as in-door sources of entertainment has gained global recognition. Likewise, many developers and programmers have created theme based or scenario based video games that render the player addicted to the games. Many superheroes, villains, assistant characters along with extended families are deployed in the game's scenario. Furthermore, there also has been an up gradation of the weapons and equipment used in the games. The arsenal deployed by different teams meets the contemporary strategies required by military. Recently, the dramatically increasing pattern of mass shootings has also been associated with the intensity of violent elements present in the video games, paving the way for fueled debates among the advocates and opponents of video games.

Video games are of various categories, and a lot of genres have developed since the introduction of the first personal computer games. Quality of the graphics and the content in the games has also increased considerably. Engagement of gamers and players is only possible through more dramatic effects; therefore, game developers around the world have intensified multiple storylines and graphics of the game. Concerned parents of gamers and young adolescents have grown increasingly worried over the elements of violence and military strategies, which are manifested in various plots of popular video games. This argumentative essay strives to present a stipulation in favor of video games and the effects that they have on children and young adolescents.

Against many common generalizations, there is no concrete evidence that video games play any part in emancipating youth violence. Adults tend to worry about many things that their children engage in, especially in video games. However, adult anxieties about the effects of entertainment are sometimes the real causes of the very effects they fear most. Dwellings on violence in popular western culture stem from some ancient works, including epic poems of Homer and the theatric dramas in the Greek period. Trending music, television, and media frequently represents violent acts. Researchers in social science disciplines and behavioral economics, have scrutinized the relationship between the occurrences of aggression in young adults and violent media, specifically violent video games. Despite the alarming conclusions that surface in the popular press, there are very few studies that deploy samples of young children and the effects that video games have on them. Another important point to consider about the extant literature is that not much of it has focused on the effects of violent video games on children, rather it sheds light on the lasting impressions of other forms of violent media. The absence of a normatively accepted definition of ‘aggression’ is one factor posing barriers in the pursuit of studying the association between instances of aggression and huge involvement in violent video games.

‘Violent media’ is commonly postulated as those forms of entertainment that are true depictions of intentional attempts by individuals in the pursuit of inflicting harm on others. In the context of scenarios of various video games, it may be difficult to demarcate violent content as a primary factor from various other factors that are constantly influencing thinking and behavior patterns.

In spite of the elements of violence, video games also have several benefits and positive aspects. In a seminal work by Gerard Jones, 'Violent Media is Good for Kids,' the author advocates that violent media is not solely harming the mental well-being of children, rather it is also presenting some multi-faceted benefits. These benefits are notable and are observed by many scholars from an emotional and psychoanalytic perspective. The adults are habitual of constantly sheltering their kids against violent incidents, which renders the children incapable in the face of adversities and realistic problems. In turn, children also detach their true feelings from the society and suppress their emotions. Jones also suggests in his highly controversial argument that violence and its forms in media are actually doing more good than harm, and if the effects are harnessed properly, many children can blossom into dynamic citizens of the society. The writer further depicts his own experience of childhood and goes on to deploy his son's story in the pursuit of attaining some credibility on his perspective on this sensitive matter (Jones).

In my opinion, the competence of children can also be pushed by exposing them to video games as they attain some abilities and skills in overcoming various obstacles in different levels of a video game. The famous game, ‘Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six,' requires a certain professional degree of teamwork, thereby enhancing the abilities of children to work efficaciously when they are assigned in different groups. Many stealth shooting games also instill a sense of logical thinking and formational strategy in children, which is not provided this action in an academic setting.

Apart from cognitive development, video games also improve the skills regarding social interactions in children. The creation of powerful bonds between online friends is possible through these games, which has additional benefits to it. Prevention of exposure to drug usage and violent tendencies is also made conducive by positively harnessing the effects of video games. I personally also made many friends with several Koreans and British inhabitants from associations formed in the PUBG game. Although it is mostly based on strategies deployed for mass shooting and the mere survival of the player, knowledge about utilizing information and tactics is adequately gained from this.

However, there is a counter-argument backed up by many instances and references in this regard. In another article by ‘When Life Imitates Video' by John Leo, he attempts to address and critically respond to those arguments which are contextually defending violent video games. Stating the examples of two school shootings, Paducah, Ky, and Colorado massacre, Leo opines that the potential psychological effects of various violent video games mirror the hostile military strategies. The author of this article does not believe that violent media is just another source of entertainment; rather, he places specific emphasis on the fact that this a larger problem than many may think (Leo).

Following the preceding line of approach, in another study, a professor of speech communication at the University of Illinois maintained that in addition to the popular culture of violent video games, environmental aspects, self-control, and genetics are also some of the key factors that increasingly contribute to the sheer rise in aggressive manifestations. Similarly, easier access to firearms in a specific region can also trigger violent thought patterns in individuals (Lynn). Research scholars also signify that no single cause or independent variable can be identified as the true reason behind increasing levels of aggressive outbursts in children and young adolescents.

Promotion of aggressive behaviors through violent video games and the resulting decline in empathy is a pervasion concern, and the common generalizations also imply that violent forms of entertainment cause adverse psychological impacts. These issues are of urgent nature to the concerns of society, but there is a need to reflect upon other factors which are responsible for causing aggression among adolescents.

Many policymakers and professional organizations have also demonstrated varied stances and opinions regarding video game effects. There are many reasons to believe that engagement with violent video games can cause aggressive thought patterns in adolescents, but this notion is controversial in nature. Domestic abuse, traumatic events, psychiatric disorders, peer-pressure, and self–esteem can also lead to aggressive behavior. Profound psychosocial and health effects are found in perpetrators and bystanders due to aggressive behavior. Greater risk of anxiety, suicidal behavior, and depression also cast a notable socio-economic toll on the well-being of individuals, and these factors are not related to violent forms of media. Aggressive behavior in adolescents, if left unchecked, can cause a lot of risks, including legal repercussions, and in some cases, it can also lead to imprisonment. An adequate and better understanding of the factors behind the etiology of aggressive behavior can pave the way for better options of treatment, and this also results in better outcomes for the adolescents in their transition to practical life. Additionally, the widely prevalent misunderstandings about the social and emotional functionalities of video games should also be cleared as they chiefly allow adolescents to engage with a partial fantasy world in the pursuit of compensating their suppressed feelings.

# **Works Cited**

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