Ege ERTEM

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English 102-110

19 May 2023

Research Question: Why is gaming harmful to a gamer's mental and physical health?

Friendly or Hostile: Gaming

Excessive amount of playing video games has emerged as a global concern due to its potential physical and mental implications. A brief definition of video gaming is playing a game that a monitor or computer program can display. There can be lots of definitions of what is video gaming, but this is the most general one. Video game is an electronic game which can be accessed and interacted with keyboard, gamepads, and controllers. The gaming industry had a late start in history. However, it became one of the most populated and worthwhile industries in the whole World. The first game was published in October 1958 (Tretkoff 1). The game was like the current game, “Pong,” a two-player game. Years after the first publication of a video game, the gaming sector has developed itself, and there are now competitions for video games with real rewards. Those competition are considered as sport and called “e-sport”. For example, in 2019, a player called “Bugha” won an outstanding award of 3 million dollars, which is the most money given in an e-sport competition (Wolf 1). There are currently millions of video games and at least one of them reach out to one individual. There are lots of genres of games that vary from competitive to casual. Everyone could find a genre for himself or herself to play and enjoy so much time. If a person wants a relaxing game, that person could find games for their own interest like story or sport games. Moreover, if that person wants a competitive game, there are hundreds of video games which can be found as strategy or war games. It is possible to see video games all around the world. Video gaming is present on many platforms allowing individuals to share experiences with friends and even anonymous users. It is a social area for users as well as forming new friendships and networks between them. It is an easy platform, allowing almost everyone to play a video game. Because of this, there are lots of active users in the gaming industry. According to research, an estimated 3 billion active users play video games (Wright 1). The number of gamers is enormous considering the Earth's population. It is almost half of the current population. This number of players also shows linear growth over the years. The growth is approximately 150 million people a year. For instance, there were 2.81 billion users in 2018 and 2.96 billion users in 2019, and it continues (Howarth 1). This growth is happening because people started to interact with each other more and more as the media developed. Modern media persuaded everyone to play more video games than they did before. Social media platforms showed everyone that playing games are easy and fun. Furthermore, it showed people how it is easy to socialize and communicate with other players through online gaming. Another reason people started playing video games is that playing a video game is simple and easy. An individual buys a platform, buys a game, and then is ready to play it with a simple procedure like this (HT TECH 1). As playing games is bringing this simple and bringing comfort, people want to play more video games. Playing more video games brings benefits and harms to an individual or society. it is debated over which one weighs more, an answer could be given. An increase in teamwork, social communication, and eye-hand coordination could be given as examples of benefits. However, these examples are insufficient to prove that video gaming is more beneficial than harmful. The amount of harm we get from gaming is much more than people think in terms of mental and physical. For the harmful side, many problems can be considered. An individual could be harmed as gaming creates disorders, behavioral problems, heart diseases, obesity, tissue and bone injuries, and, most important, addiction.

Gaming can cause lots of problems, and one of them is Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD). Internet Gaming Disorder makes people have a hard time coping with daily activities and work. For example, a study shows that a person played video games for two years and now has sleep issues. If the person is in the absence of video games, he feels fear, anxiety, confusion, boredom, panic, and sadness (Nasution 1). This study concludes that a few years of gaming could affect a person brutally. It is a difficult job to survive without video games as it can cause depression generally. Another study also showed that a person who has an online gaming disorder could sleep less than 5 hours, while a casual gamer sleeps approximately 7 hours a day (Bansal 1). The 2 hours difference creates a massive gap in energy and time between an IGD patient and a casual gamer. That 2 hours gap can make the person feel under the weather and under-perform in daily life. The reason for the change in mind is stress. A virtual gaming world could relieve a gamer's stress but form a faulty coping mechanism, leading to the increased time spent on gaming, which further increases stress (Bansal 1). This faulty coping mechanism is caused of the virtual world created by games. Games can create a world which is an image of the player’s brain. That virtual world is the reason that the gamer relieve stress because it creates what cannot be created in real world. There is a loop in which a person involved more in gaming, decreased sleep quality, and increased stress. It would be in the person’s interest to control the time wasted on video gaming in case of a disorder. Furthermore, gaming can cause behavioral problems as well as they can cause disorders. A child who plays video games excessively develops different actions and behaviors than a child who does not play or does not play video games excessively. Behavior change can be considered a serious condition as it may persuade a person to self-harm. As stress and violence are involved in most video games, children are more likely to be affected. Children between the age of 12-17 have more intention to self-harm and suicide (Rikkers 1). The inappropriate scenes and gameplay could be the main reason for self-harm. Children have a gullible brain, making them vulnerable to the visuals they see in games. They can try to recreate and relate themselves to the inappropriate scenes. What they play and see on the screen need to be controlled by parents or the game-seller. Another reason for self-harm is stress, real-life situations can be challenging for a person, and that person may want to escape from the real world by playing video games where the person is feeling peace and comfort. Research shows that youth suffering emotional problems or high-stress levels want to spend more time playing video games (Rikkers 1). This is because people tend to live in the not-real world, and they prefer living in the virtual world designed by the game. Virtual world makes the person lose its reality in real-world which results the person to forget his or her responsibility in the current and real world. It needs to be taken into attention as too much gaming can cause mental and behavioral disorders.

One of the most important problem gaming causes is addiction. Video game addiction is the state of being addicted to video games and cannot no longer function normal without them. Unfortunately, studies show that in America, between %3 and %10 of United States citizens are addicted to video games. If the population is considered as 300 million, there are approximately 15 million addicted people to gaming in the United States. That number is tremendous, considering how dangerous this addiction is. Video game addiction makes a person suffer and have difficulties in daily life. Without gaming, the person cannot reach fulfillment and they may find it challenging in the daily basis. Performance in real life would decrease in school, work, and household (Clinic 1). Poor performance can lead a person to depression and loneliness. Not performing as used to can be the main reason for depression because it forces a person to think what is wrong in their life. Gaming addiction is similar to gambling addiction. Both are behavioral addictions (Clinic 1). They are similar as they both take too much time and much money. Also, both addictions can be considered severe, leading to catastrophic results. Video gaming addiction could persuade a human to spend too much money on games which will eventually affect the human’s financial situation. Furthermore, low self-control, impulsivity, and anxiety could be added to the problems. Gaming is the primary survival source of life for an addicted person. Without gaming, it is hard to live for that person. In short, a person should be careful about the time those individuals play because if it is not cared it could lead to disastrous problems like bankruptcy and low self-control.

In terms of the physical harms of gaming, lots of examples can be counted. Heart disease, body injuries, and obesity can be given as examples. A person who played video games for an extended period could suffer from these problems. Heart problems can be seen in a fraction of players. However, heart problem is a severe problem, so even if only one person has it, the problem must be investigated. Count of people with a heart problem is high. The stress and the adrenaline in gaming could be the reason for it. “It could induce some stress, some adrenaline, raise your heart rate” (Glasgow) as this quote states there is a risk of changes in the heart beat as games are played. People who play multiplayer action games are more at risk as their game involves more stress and more violence. Multiplayer war games contain lots of 18+ visuals, like blood and death. These visuals can change the heart rhythm while those visuals affect the mental state of the gamer. Furthermore, another problem is that gaming can cause body injuries. People are born with strong tissue and bones. It is hard to damage the human body, but if a person plays video games for a long period could get those damage. A widespread injury is a hand injury. Controllers and keyboards have become smaller, affecting the input device's compatibility. Smaller devices caused hand injury. Some specific hand injuries are carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis, and synovitis (Writer 1). The injuries are not only on hand as neck and spine injuries can happen. It is also expected that a gamer gets injured in their neck. Gamers are playing on a chair, and as they lean forward, they cannot control and are not aware of the straightness of their spine, so neck and spine injuries have a risk of occurring. “Neck pain from gaming is an extremely common occurrence and one that is caused by a variety of factors including injury, poor posture…” (Centofanti 1). Neck pains could have resulted from poor posture identified in the quote. It is important to sit correctly and be careful to prevent neck and spine injuries. Finally, playing lots of video games can make an individual eat more and then gain some weight, even obesity. There is a relationship between gaming and obesity. Playing games makes a person unconscious, and that person will eat whatever there is to eat. Especially this problem is seen in games promoting unhealthy food. Children between 7-12 years of age are likelier to eat what they see in the games (Calvert 1). Children need to be careful about what they play and see in video games to prevent the problem of “obesity.” As it is mentioned before children’s brains can be more affected by what they see on the screen because they are more vulnerable. Ultimately, lots of hours of gaming does not only stay by causing mental damages and also creates physical injuries on a human body. For example, neck and spine injuries or obesity or hand injuries. It needs to be taken into attention how the gaming is done to prevent the possible damages.

To sum up, video gaming is a fun tool if it is controlled. On the other hand, as the hours and time increase playing video games, it will eventually cause harmful situations. Harmful conditions will make a person’s life miserable because they will cause obesity, IGD, addiction, and much more. Playing video games could have a probability to cause all the problems mentioned. Firstly, IGD and addiction is the most severe problem a gamer can have. IGD and addiction would make a person commit their life to gaming which eventually causes one of the physical or mental problem or more than one. Secondly, unhealthy food promoted games can cause obesity as people are persuaded to eat more and more unhealthy products therefore an individual must be careful on what he or she eats. Moreover, the posture and the compatibility of the gaming conditions could create severe injuries on bones or tissues. Last of all, games include violence and terror can create a cardiovascular problem in the gamer. Those games contain lots of stress and adrenaline which could affect a person in a serious way. It is in the gamer's best interest to play in a controlled way. Preventing all these problems can make a person have fun and enjoy.

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