A STUDY ON EFFECT OF CHILDRENS AND TEENAGERS BEHAVIOURS DUE VIOLENT VIDEO GAMES

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ABSTRACT:

*Violent video games present a number of dangers to children and adolescents. The effects of violent video games and the psychological processes through which such video games can affect the player are reviewed. Moderators of the relationship between violent video game effects are examined, including individual differences and game characteristics.*

INTRODUCTION:

Children and adolescents can become overly involved and even obsessed with videogames. Spending large amounts of time playing these games can create problems and lead to:

* Poor social skills
* Time away from family time, school-work, and other hobbies
* Lower grades and reading less
* Exercising less, and becoming overweight
* Aggressive thoughts and behaviors

Studies have evolved from a focus on television in the 1950’s to video games in the 2000’s. Previous studies have concluded that there is a relationship between media and aggressive behavior. Several factors are taken into account including the time spent playing video games, the type of game played (violent or non-violent), an individual’s personality, and their history of aggressive behavior

Although many of the effects of violent games mirror the effects of violent television, there are at least three reasons to believe that violent video games have stronger effects on aggression than violent television programs. First, video game play is an active process whereas watching television is passive, and people learn better when they are actively involved. For example, suppose a person wanted to learn how to fly an airplane. Which of the following instruction methods would be preferable: reading a book, watching a television program, or using a video game flight simulator in Second, players of violent video games are more likely to identify with a violent character. If the game is a first person shooter, players have the same visual perspective as the killer. If the game is third person, the player controls the actions of the violent character from a more distant visual perspective. In either case the player is directly linked to a violent character, whereas in a violent television program viewers might or might not identify with a violent character. Third, violent games reward violent behavior, such as by awarding points or allowing players to advance to the next game level. In some games, players are rewarded through verbal praise, such as hearing the words "Nice shot!" after killing an enemy with a gun. It is well known that rewarding behavior increases its frequency. People go to work if their employers did not reward them by paying them money. In television programs, a reward is not directly tied to the viewer’s behavior. Any reward experienced is indirect, such as watching the "good guys" win. A recent study provided the first evidence that playing violent games produces stronger effects than passively watching someone else play them. In this study, some participants played violent games while others watched the games being played, and the effects on aggression were stronger for boys who played video games than for boys who watched others play the games.

A. Aggressive Behaviors, Thoughts, and Emotions

One of the primary public concerns about violent video games is fear over the kind of behaviors the players will assume as a result of their exposure to the games. Evidence points to an increase in aggressive behaviors both in the short run and in the long run. Experimental studies have shown that playing violent games directly causes players to behave more aggressively. These experimental studies typically expose participants to violent games for relatively short amounts of time (usually about fifteen to thirty minutes) before measuring aggression. Aggression typically is measured by allowing participants to blast a confederate (an actor) with loud noise through headphones. People who play violent video games give longer and louder noise blasts to their opponents than those who play nonviolent video games. Longitudinal studies reveal other, real-life examples of increased aggression, including higher numbers of arguments with teachers and more involvement in physical fights. In addition to increasing aggressive behaviors, playing violent video games can also increase aggressive thoughts. After playing a violent game, people list more aggressive thoughts and interpret ambiguous stories in a more hostile manner. In fact, exposure to violent video games may lead the player to interpret many different situations in a more aggressive way an effect known as the hostile attribution bias. Playing violent video games also can increase aggressive feelings in players. After playing a violent game, people report feeling more anxious and hostile. Empirical evidence also indicates that playing violent video games can lead to the development of a more hostile and aggressive personality.

B. Physiological Arousal

The effects of violent video games are not only evident in aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors—physiological changes also can occur during game play. Exposure to violent video games produces numerous changes in the body, including increased heart rate and increased skin conductance. This physiological arousal later can affect how the player interprets a mild specific emotion (e.g., anger) to an unrelated event (e.g., enduring a teasing comment from a peer).This interpretation can cause the player to feel the emotion as more severe than otherwise because some of the emotional response stimulated by the violent game is misattributed to the provocation, a process called excitation transfer. This excitation transfer potentially could cause the player to act more aggressively—due to heightened arousal—in a situation where he or she normally might not act out.

C. Prosocial Behaviors

"Prosocial” behavior’ refers to voluntary actions that are intended to help or benefit another individual or group of individuals." This can include giving physical aid to another person, donating money to charity, sharing toys, and other similar activities. A negative relationship exists between playing violent video games and exhibiting prosocial behaviors afterward; that is, exposure to violent video games decreases the likelihood that the player will engage in an activity that helps another person

Long-Term Effects

The long-term changes that occur after playing violent video games mainly can be accounted for by three psychological processes: observational learning of aggressive behaviors, classical and operant conditioning of aggressive responses, and desensitization of emotional processes elicited by violence.

Each of these processes will be examined below.

Observational learning: Mimicry is the short-term copying of the actions of others. In contrast, observational learning refers to "the process through which behavioral scripts, world schemas, and normative beliefs become encoded in a [person]’s mind simply as a consequence of the person observing others. Whereas short-term mimicry needs only one exposure to the observed behavior for children to imitate the action, long-term observational learning usually requires repeated exposure or repeated rehearsal. Observational learning is a powerful extension of mimicry in that it can produce long-lasting changes in the way a person thinks, feels, and behaves. For example, extensive observation of violence (such as by playing violent video games for days at a time) can lead children to attribute more and more in showing the ways that they acquired already. These form characteristics are known to increase children’s attention. Children also may be more affected if the violence portrayed is seen as justified, if the violence is glamorized, if the game fosters identification with aggressive characters, or if the game is perceived as more realistic.

**Tips for Parents:**

Parents can help their children enjoy these games and avoid problems by:

• Checking the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) ratings to learn about the game’s content.

• selecting appropriate games—both in content and level of development.

• Playing videogames with their children to experience the game’s content.

• Setting clear rules about game content and playing time, both in and outside of your home.

• Strongly warning children about potential serious dangers of Internet contacts and relationships while playing games online.

• Talking with other parents about your family’s video game rules.

• Remembering that you are a role model for your children – including video games you play as an adult.

If parents are concerned that their child is spending too much time playing video games or appears preoccupied or obsessed with aggressive or violent video games, they should first set some limits (for example – playing the games for one hour after all homework is done) and try to encourage the child to participate in other activities. If there is continued concern about their child’s behavior or the effects of videogames, a consultation with a qualified mental health professional may be helpful.

Conclusion

Video games and accompanying online content offer much in the way of excitement and entertainment for children and adolescents, and indeed many positive experiences can be derived from playing the games. However, parents should be aware of the dangers inherent in playing violent video games, and should monitor their youth’s game playing accordingly.