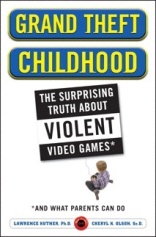
THE EFFECTS OF VIOLENT VIDEO GAMES ON CHILDREN





ENG 105

SECTION 2

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**ABSTRACT**

The research topic for this paper presented hereby is on the topic titled ‘The effects of violent video games on children.’ This paper has been prepared as a part of English 105 course under the supervision of Ms. Michelle Draper for the summer semester of 2011. This paper analyses the exposure of children to violent video games, which is significantly linked to increases in aggressive behavior, aggressive cognition, aggressive affect, and cardiovascular arousal as well as the decreases in helping behavior. My paper has been divided into several parts for the clear understanding of the topic. The first part is introduction, which is then followed by background, areas of research, hypothesis and methodology. All of this basically gives the main idea of the topic, along with the explanation how I have gone about my research. It focuses on how children are adversely affected by violent video games. The primary and secondary data together with their analysis deals with the presentation of the knowledge and information I have gathered as I went through with this research. It tries to review and relate the findings with my hypothesis, which tells that “Violent video games can be of acute harm and detriment to the growing process of a child”.

Questions such as why does children play violent video games, what are the roles of their parents, what are the detrimental effects of violent games are all answered in the second section. The limitations section explains in detail about the short-comings I have experienced. Finally, a conclusion was made to the entire research. Attached at the very end is the appendix section. This includes all the handwritten materials, rough drafts and other materials which were used in the completion of the research paper.

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**INTRODUCTION**

If one asks a question that what do most children like to do in their free time, there is a very high probability that the answer will be “playing video games.” The answer should not be a surprise the questioner. We are standing in the 21st century, and technology is the main driving force in this era. Technology has an impact in all parts of a person’s life-whether it be social, political, economical or personal, it would be quite difficult for a person to say that “Technology does not affect my lifestyle.” Hence, video game, which is an amazing output of technological advancements, is ranked at the top of the list of favourite activities of children in modern times.

Video games have been available to consumers for the last 30 years. They are a unique form of entertainment, because they encourage players to become a part of the game's script. Today's sophisticated video games require players to pay constant attention to the game, rather than passively watching a movie. This has both positive and negative impacts on players.

If we compare the pros of playing video games to the cons, the cons far outweigh the pros. If the adverse effects of playing any kind of video games are higher compared to the favourable ones, let one imagine what will be the effects on children of playing “violent” video games? Undoubtedly, the negative impacts on children who are engaged in playing violent video games are acute, and this is the main area of study and analysis of this research paper. Therefore, the topic of the research paper is – “The effects of violent video games on children.”

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Violent content video games have become very popular among children and adolescents, which have a wide range of negative effects on them, causing great concern for parents, teachers, and policy makers. This research cumulates findings across existing empirical research on the effects of violent video games, together with primary research based on survey in order to estimate overall effect size and discern important trends and moderating variables.

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**BACKGROUND**

To understand this research project and reap the maximum benefits out of it, a reader should have some background knowledge about the topic concerned. Video games that are usually played by children mainly come in four forms: PC games, console games connected to T.V, hand games and games in cell phones. Console games are the most popular ones, and some mentionable names are Play Station, X-Box, Sega, WII, etc. Usually the video games that are released also have a PC version for gamers who prefer computer to T.V.

The main categories of video games include Racing, Sports, Shooting (first person, third person), Strategy, Virtual Life or Third Life, Mind Games, etc. Games which contain violent contents generally belong to the Shooting, Strategy and Virtual Life categories. Approximately 40% of all gamers are female, while the remainder is male.

Violent video games have a wide range of adverse effects on children. They have negative effects on behaviour and psychology, health, education and career, etc. They are more prone to confrontation with their teachers and may engage in fights with their peers. Research supports the view that such games lead to aggression. In psychology,  *aggression* refers to any behaviour that demonstrates a malicious intent to cause harm. There are three types of aggression, defined by the method used: physical, verbal, and relational. *Violence* refers to physical aggression of which the victim is likely to suffer serious physical injury. However, the general public also uses the word "aggressive" to include less negative behaviours such as "assertive, confident, or energetic".

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**AREAS OF RESEARCH**

Causes of playing video games

There are many reasons for which children engage in playing video games, many of which contain violent contents. The space for outdoor sports is inadequate, esp. in metropolitan areas such as Dhaka and Chittagong. Many parents do not allow their children to go out to play due to security reasons. Many children do not have enough time to go to play outside in the evening due to homework or studies. It is easier for them to play video games at night when they are free. Almost all parents allow their children to play video games for entertainment purpose.

Effects on psychology and behaviour

Violent video games have damaging effects to the psychology and behaviour of children. In my research I found that children tend to become rude, violent and aggressive. They disobey their parents and teachers and engage in fights with their peers. They are less interactive, less attentive and tend to become introverts. They face family interaction problems such as less positive parental relations. Other problems include increase in emotional disorder symptoms and somatic complaints.

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Effects on academic career

Through my research, I have found that school performance detriments as video game usage increases, Part of the detrimental academic performance is linked to the amount of time children are allowed to play video games. This mainly happens as time allocated for studies are inadequate and children tend to lose interest and concentration on studies.

Effects on future life

Playing video games may make children more prone to criminal activities because violent criminal acts are continually repeated throughout the video game. Moreover, due to poor grades in the academic schooling life, they end up with poor career or even remain unemployed.

Role of parents

Parents have an important role to play. The level of awareness among parents about violent games is undoubtedly insufficient. Most have low or even no control over their children`s activities.

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Alternatives to violent video games

A number of possible solutions have come out from the research study. More play grounds are required for outdoor sports. Teacher in the schools have an important role to play-by encouraging them to read more books. Other indoor games may be promoted as well.

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**HYPOTHESIS**

Violent video games can be of acute harm and detriment to the growing process of a child. I expect to find that video games which consist of fighting, bloodshed, war, crimes, etc have adverse effects on the psychology, behaviour, academic and future lives of the children, and that most parents are unaware of such detrimental effects and hence fail to play an effective role in preventing and overcoming such the negative effects of violent video gaming.

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**METHODOLOGY**

For the primary research, I conducted a field survey of the children who are actually engaged in playing video games, together with their parents. The questionnaire set for children contained 7 questions of both open ended and MCQ type. I interviewed both boys and girls, with their age ranging from 8 to 17 years. The questionnaire designed for the parents contained 9 questions each. Either the father or the mother of a particular child was asked to fill out the questionnaire.

For the secondary research, I used resources from the library, consulting relevant books and articles in magazines and newspapers. I also used online materials extensively, such as online journals and discussions on blogs.

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**PRIMARY DATA PRESENTATION & ANALYSIS**

The survey was divided in to two portions- one set of questions was designed for children who play the video games and another set of questionnaire was aimed at their parents.

Findings from questionnaires filled out by children

When the children were asked what their favourite activity was, the following result was obtained.

It can be inferred from the pie chart that 43 % of all children preferred watching T.V. The second popular activity was playing video games, while the figures for studying and other activities were 14 % and 12% respectively. Page I 9

Most of the children answered that they were occasional gamers, playing video games only they had a chance to, while a few did admit that they were addicted to playing video games. The number of children who never played video games was rather insignificant.

Four options were given about what type of games they liked to play, which are Sports, First Person Shooter, Racing and Others. The pie chart below illustrates their response.

The pink area represents those who likes to play first person shooting games, which accounts for the highest percentage at 48%. It is worth mentioning here that this type of games contain massive violence and criminal activities, including disturbing images and bloodshed. 21% of all

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children preferred sporting games, while the other 21% loved to play racing games. Other types of games were selected by 10 % of the children. From this portion of the survey, it is very clear that most children are engaged in playing violent video games, which supports my hypothesis.

As the children were asked why they preferred violent video games to other non violent ones, they answered games like GTA, Project IGI, Max Payne, etc provided them with entertainment and excitement, which were missing to a great extent in the other type if games mentioned.

Children playing video games differentiated themselves from those playing outdoor sports by saying that they were physically less fit and less interactive. Those who go out to play generally mix with other children of the same age and share emotions and ideas, which help them to think more clearly and improve their interaction skills. On the other hand, those children who are engaged in playing video games all day long staying at home does not get the scope to talk, interact or share ideas. Therefore, they tend to be introverts and suffer from behavioural disorder symptoms. Many children would like to go out to play, but factors such as excessive home works, scarcity of play grounds and no permission from their parents act as constraints.

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About 75% of all children interviewed would not stop playing video games if their parents asked them to.

Findings from questionnaires filled out by parents

A lot of important and interesting facts came out from the answers of the parents. Almost all parents allow their children to play video games as they that their children need some form of entertainment. Some allowed their children to play video games simply because they wanted to.

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The pie chart above illustrates the level of awareness among parents about the adverse effects of violent video games on their children. The blue region the portion who are aware of the effects,

While the pink portion shows those who are unaware. 92 % parents, claim to be aware of the negative effects, while only a small proportion admits that they are unaware. Among the 92% of the parents who are aware, a further 50 % claims to know the type of games their children plays (i.e. half of 0.92 of all parents know the type of games children play-whether racing, shooting, sports, etc).

Although majority claimed that they did not observe any change in child’s behaviour due to video games, some who did say that they observed changes, admitted that their children became more aggressive, absent minded and disobedient than before. Parents were worried about their children’s academic career and future lives since they believed that violent video games affected both the variables. They agreed that playing video games is a waste of time, made their child less interactive and physically weaker and may have adverse behavioural impacts.

88% parents thought that they would fail to prevent their children from playing video games. When they were asked about their role to be played, most parents, esp. mothers claimed that they have given their best efforts to protect their children from the adverse effects of violent video games. As far as alternatives to violent video games are concerned, almost all suggested that more space should be allocated for children play grounds, so that they can participate in outdoor sports like cricket, soccer, etc. Encouraging children to read books is also an important solution. Moreover, other indoor sports will also help the children to divert attention from the lucrative yet damaging video games. Page I 13

**SECONDARY DATA PRESENTATION & ANALYSIS**

Video games have been available to consumers for the last 30 years. They are a unique form of entertainment, because they encourage players to become a part of the game's script. Today's sophisticated video games require players to pay constant attention to the game, rather than passively watching a movie. This has both positive and negative impacts on players. Several studies have been published and books written that explore these impacts on today's children.

**What impact does playing video games have on children or adolescents?**

Anderson (2003) stated that the most widely used **"positive"** impact video games are said to have on children is that they **may improve a player's manual dexterity and computer literacy**. Ever-improving technology also provides players with better graphics that give a more "realistic" virtual playing experience. (p. 67)

This quality makes the video game industry a powerful force in many adolescent lives. However, numerous studies show that video games, especially ones with violent content, make teens more aggressive.   
 Part of the increase in aggressive behavior is linked to the amount of time children are allowed to play video games. In one study by Walsh (2000), a majority of teens admitted that their parents **do not impose a time limit** on the number of hours they are allowed to play video games. The study also showed that most parents are unaware of the content or the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) rating (see below) of the video games their children play.

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Gentile, Lynch, Linder & Walsh (2004) reported "adolescent girls played video games for an average of 5 hours a week, whereas boys averaged 13 hours a week"(p.6). The authors also stated that teens who play violent video games for extended periods of time:

* Tend to be more aggressive
* Are more prone to confrontation with their teachers
* May engage in fights with their peers
* See a decline in school achievements

The interactive quality of video games differs from passively viewing television or movies because it allows players to become active participants in the game's script. Players benefit from engaging in acts of violence and are then able to move to the game's next level.   
  
 Gentile & Anderson (2003) states that playing video games may increase aggressive behaviour because **violent acts are continually repeated** throughout the video game. This method of repetition has long been considered an effective teaching method in reinforcing learning patterns.  
  
 Video games also encourage players to identify with and play the role of their favourite characters.

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In a Joint Statement (2000) before the Congressional Public Health Summit, a number of American medical associations -- the American Medical Association, American Academy of Paediatrics, American Psychological Association, American Academy of Family Physicians and American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry -- caution parents about violence in the media and its negative effect on children. Their report states that exposure to violent media can elevate aggressive feelings and thoughts, especially in children. These effects on aggressive behaviour can be long-term. Although fewer studies have been conducted on interactive video games, evidence suggests that playing violent video games may have a more dramatic influence on the behaviour of children and adolescents (Joint Statement, 2000). 

# [List of top negative effects of video games on children](http://addictionblog.org/top-10/top-10-negative-effects-of-video-games-on-children/)

Many parents worry, no doubt, about the effect video games have on their children. We list the ten most common problems recently investigated by researchers from 2006-present.

1. An increase in emotional disorder symptoms
2. An increase in and behavioural disorder symptoms
3. Declines in verbal memory performance
4. Somatic complaints
5. Detrimental school performance (as video game usage increases, GPA and SAT scores decrease)
6. Family interaction problems such as less positive parental relations
7. Significant reduced amounts of slow-wave (REM) sleep Page I 16
8. Modifications in visual selective attention
9. Playing violent video games is a significant risk factor for later physically aggressive

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**LIMITATIONS**

In the entire process of working for this research paper, I have faced numerous constraints and limitations. First of all, the secondary resources available for the relevant topic are insufficient. Almost no books or journals are available in the local libraries, and I had to go through a tough time to find the desired books and journals for my research. I also found it difficult to deal with the children who answered my questionnaires, some of them might have deliberately given biased or wrong answers. Some parents too were not much eager to fill out my questionnaires. Time was a big obstacle, since such a broad research requires more time. If I had more time to work on this project, I would have done research on the topic more extensively, collected more reliable sources of secondary data and improve the overall quality of the research paper.

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**CONCLUSION**

After working on this research paper for 4 months -reading various books, journals, web materials, magazines, etc, in the process, time has come to draw a conclusion. After my extensive research, I do conclude that violent video games have adverse effects on the psychology, behaviour, academic career and future lives of the children. This is a very broad topic that I have worked on, and further researches and investigations are needed to fully understand the matter. I would like to suggest all those interested to do a research project on the same matter to work with patience, punctuality and confidence. The scope of working in this topic is broad. More analysis of secondary data is required to further explore this topic.

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