

## The Impact on Children Playing Computer Games

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### **Abstract**

Children spend an enormous amount of time playing electronic games, many of which have positive and negative consequences for children's development. However, when you weigh the positives, like improving problem-solving skills and spatial abilities with the negative consequences, like obesity, distractibility and exposure to violence, one can see by using qualitative research which one outweighs the other.

*Keywords:* playing video games, children, consequences, qualitative research

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### **Introduction:**

The children of today spend a lot of time playing video games either on the internet or game consoles, such as X-Box, Wii, and PlayStation. Many people contend these games are just a tool either for entertainment or educational purposes. Supporters of video games believe that electronic games can have many positive effects on children, including helping them control diseases, helping them manage depression and even improving their eyesight.

However, more and more people are growing afraid of the negative influences these games have on our children's lives. Some say the games are too violent and, in turn, cause our children to be violent. Others say the games lead to social isolation, even obesity. Others say the games make our children too impulsive and distractible.

### **Purpose of the Study:**

The purpose of this study is to identify how playing video games affect children which are done by using qualitative research to conduct the study.

### **Problem Statement:**

This research paper aims to investigate what kind of impacts computer games have on our children, whether positive or negative.

### **Purpose of the Study:**

The purpose of this study is to identify factors that affect children playing video games. By investigating the reasons that affect our children, one will gain a better understanding about this issue.

### **Research Question:**

- What kinds of consequences do children have by playing video games?

### **Significance of the study:**

By knowing the consequences of playing video games, one can determine how they negatively and positively influence the children affected by them.

### **Strategy:**

The strategy is qualitative research because it relies on opinions and perceptions, and this is what I am looking for when I am investigating the impact on children playing video games. Moreover, I will use the exploratory research method because I have limited knowledge of the research area. I think case study research is appropriate for my study because the interview technique is the primary method of data collection under this strategy. Also, case study questions can be presented in a verbal and written format.

The advantage of this strategy is that it will give me a better understanding of my topic and help me to gain a lot of details about the topic rather than other research designs. The disadvantage is not being able to find answers to research questions. Another disadvantage is that case study cannot be generalized for the whole population.

### **Assumptions & Limitations:**

In this paper, I assume that the result will not give an accurate answer due to the fact that the number of participants is very limited. Also, this study is conducted in the summer which is when most people are on a vacation. Moreover, I did the interview and translation, but I am not an expert in doing this and do not have the funding to hire one.

### **Context of the Study:**

The study is placed in the United States (Lubbock, Texas). To conduct the study, I have to interview one person who is willing to answer the study questions. Playing video games is a topic that has a lot of different perspectives, for instance, thirteen percent of all children are addicted to video games and that is leading to children having smaller attention spans (Bickford, 2010 p. 12). Also, there is a “high correlation with children who are connected to computer games and those who are extremely shy” (Ayas, 2012, p. 632).

An additional concern associated with electronic gaming is social isolation. Almost every piece of evidence I see or read indicates children spend hours and hours on video games. Tech Tonic: Towards a new literacy of technology, for example, says children typically spend about thirty-three hours a week on computer games and other electronic distractions (Abram et al., 2004).

There is a concern that the entire time sitting is adding to a trend toward obesity in children. “Video gaming is a largely sedentary activity and time spent playing the video game is implicated in the childhood obesity epidemic” (Bickford, 2010, p. 12). People who believe that computer games have negative impacts on children most likely support this opinion and feel that “childhood obesity has become a major health issue and anything that contributes to a sedentary lifestyle should be examined to see if its benefits outweigh the risk” (Abram et al., 2004, p. 2).

However, there is some evidence that children playing electronic games can have some positive benefits. For example, playing video games has been helping children beat depression. This is occurring because some games are designed for fighting depression and studies have shown that they are having a positive effect. Instead of sending the repeated negative messages of violence and killing that most video games do, these games send the

message over and over that the depressed child is not a loser and that he or she is loved (Szalavitz, 2012). Also, video games have been shown to teach children healthy skills for the self-care of asthma and diabetes. Children can also learn iconic, spatial and visual attention skills from video games (Gentile, 2000).

Furthermore, according to Bavelier, who did several studies of the human brain, people who play a lot of action games have better eyesight and can track moving objects in space faster than those who do not play a lot of video games. The parts of the brain that are used in focus and attention are more efficient in people who play action games (Bavelier, 2012).

By highlighting both sides of the opinions, those who are supportive and those who are not, the researcher can gain a base knowledge to conduct the study and prepare the process to move forward in the research.

#### **Data Collection Methods:**

Qualitative paradigm would allow me to reach deeper and obtain more information which can be done through an interview. I will interview my neighbor because he has four children, and I believe he will help me in conducting my research. I will take the interviewer's written consent. Then, the interview will be recorded, and then I will ask the questions and listen to the answers. The estimated time for the interview will be 20 minutes. The interview will be done on July 20, 2015. I will then script the interview.

#### **Data Sources:**

This study is focused in the United States, specifically in Lubbock, Texas. The reason that Lubbock is chosen is because it is where I reside. Since this study is focused on a specific geographic area, which is Lubbock, and also focused in a specific area, I will use two

data sources: my neighbor who has four children and online sources, such as the University Library.

### **Data Analysis:**

The data analysis will begin after finishing collecting the data from resources, the interview and the online sources. The interview will be tape-recorded to ease the analysis process. I will also be taking notes. The recording and the notes will be categorized and coded to measure the frequency which will help in making sense of the data.

### **Trustworthiness and Transferability:**

To establish trustworthiness in this study, I am conducting a qualitative study in Lubbock, Texas, where I have been living for two years. I will interview my neighbor to answer my study questions. Also, to ensure my study is credible, I am going to use triangulation. By using this method, I am not only relying on information that is provided from the interview, I am also reviewing the online reviews that have an opinion toward my issue. This will ensure that I am getting information from two sources. The goal of selection interview will help me in establishing transferability of this study.

### **Findings & Implications:**

Both the face-to-face interview and the online reviews showed that video games have power on children; however, according to “interviewer, 1”, video games should be limited to a specific time of the day under the parents’ supervision. Also, during the interview my neighbor has mentioned the word "supervision" five times which is giving me an indication that “parental supervision” is an important part.

Also, I found that “interviewer, 1” strongly believes that if video games are not under parent supervision they could affect the children’s ethics. Moreover, “interviewer, 1” said

that video games become obsessive these days because they a part of our children lives and you can barely find a child without playing them. Moreover, “interviewer, 1” strongly believed that playing a lot of video games drives children to be isolated because children are silent, alone and are not gaining the experience needed to be social.

During the interview, I found that “interviewer, 1” is very pessimistic toward the issue. I mentioned some studies that support playing video games and that spending a lot of time playing them can be a benefit to children because they help to improve their ability to learn new things and problem solve (Bavelier, 2012). “Interviewer, 1” said “I respect these opinions, but my experience is completely different.”

As one can see, the perspective of “interviewer, 1” represents one side of an opinion. The other side of the opinion supports playing video games. By the end of the interview, I found myself agreeing with the point that playing video games should be limited and under a parents’ supervision. In addition, according to “interviewer, 1” playing video games not only causes children to be aggressive, isolated and obese, but they negatively affect the children’s academic performance. When children are spending a lot of time in front of the screen, they tend to not care or forget about their assignments and school as a whole.

However, Szalavitz has a different opinion. He feels that children can learn coping skills to deal with depression. His article is indeed convincing on the point that learning this through video games is very effective. His study had two control groups, one who is playing the video game as a way of dealing with depression and one who is not. Forty-four percent of the video game players said they recovered completely from depression while twenty-six percent of the patients who just used therapy said they recovered from the condition (Szalavitz, 2012). So, by comparing Szalavitz’s study and “interviewer, 1” responses, I found a huge gap in their opinion toward the impact on children playing video games. From this



point of view, we could say the issue is sounding complicated because every opinion should be respected.

Ayas points to a strong correlation between shyness and computer game addiction. Needless to say shy people tend to isolate socially. However, an even more interesting question that is brought up in the article is whether or not shyness or computer game addiction comes first. Obviously, shyness existed long before computer games.

Another aspect to examine here is how much children play video games together. These days, games are designed for up to four players, so children may be able to have the face to face interaction while they play the games. They can certainly have those face to face interactions while on the playgrounds talking about the games. It seems very likely to me, however, that most children prefer to play these games by themselves, sitting in front of a screen (Ayas, 2012).

Bavelier found that there are all kinds of intellectual benefits to playing video games and that these games broaden perception and increase concentration (Bavelier, 2012). Back to the point of impact of playing video games, the issue has different groups of opinions, but according to this research, I found that playing video games is a very controversial issue because there is no right answer for each question.

### **Analysis:**

During the interview, I found something unanticipated. I found that “interviewer, 1” is very pessimistic from the fact that he kept repeating “parental supervision.” I asked, “Why are you focused on those words and keep repeating them?” He said it was because that when he noticed that his son preferred to play the game alone in his room, he discovered that the game had a lot of inappropriate pictures. As a researcher, stories like this need to be

considered and, in hearing this one, I could understand that video games are okay if they are under parental supervision.

According to Dorman (1997), video and computer-based games represent forces in American culture that are not likely to fade. In fact, the role of technology in everyday life Americans is increasing dramatically. However, attention should be given to the potential detrimental effects that technology may have on health, education, and society. (p. 137). By mentioning this point, I could infer that parents should pay attention on what kind of games their children are playing. I believe that “interviewer, 1” has a right to be cautious about what kind of games his son is playing; however, this does not mean that his son has to stop playing games at all. We should simply know what our children are playing.

Moreover, when children do something inappropriate, such as being violent or playing inappropriate game, parents are setting them up to have bad attitudes. One of the problem’s solutions is to start a new page with the child. Likewise, what happened with “interviewer, 1” is he noticed a bad attitude in his son from video games and strongly believed, it was a very negative consequence. In addition, some scholars believe that video games with objectionable content could cause dangerous effects on children and adolescents as well (Bijvank, 2009).

My analysis based on the interview is that “interviewer, 1” disagrees with children playing video games in general, but he cannot prevent his children to play because most children these days are playing video games. Moreover, my professional opinion toward the issue is playing video games have both positive and negative consequences on children and we cannot determine which one is outweighed because it is based on how children are playing these games.

### **Recommendations:**

To reach a better answer to the research questions (and for further research), I would recommend that playing video games for children should be limited for a specific time of the day. Moreover, I could say that playing video games for children have both positive and negative consequences, but, according to my research, I found that the positive consequences could be outweighed by the negative consequences if the children are playing games in a specific time of the day.

### **Conclusion:**

It seems very clear that a lot of the video games being played have negative and positive consequences for children. This paper examines the major points of consequences on children who play video games. One being that our children can become more desensitized to violence and have more violent behavior from playing violent games. The games also may lead to social isolation for children and can even lead to obesity. While there is some evidence to the contrary, it seems clear that playing these games definitely lead to distractibility and shorter attention spans.

Many of the benefits children get from playing these games include improvement in problem solving, vision and spatial ability. However, this can come from other means like playing tennis or doing math puzzles. Another issue is whether playing video games leads to obesity. Most of these games are not the Wii style games that involve movement, and the hours spent playing these games clearly helps to lead to a sedentary lifestyle.

Playing video games should only be allowed if adults have access to the violent electronic games and severely limit all children's exposures to these games. The benefits to learning and growing up the old fashion way clearly outweigh the risk of overexposure to

electronic gaming technology. Also, according to my qualitative research analysis, I could say that playing video games have advantages and disadvantages at the same time.

As a result, I would like to mention one of the most valuable points I have gained from this research paper. Children spend lot of time playing video games, many of which have positive and negative consequences for children's achievement, so playing video games in general should be limited to a specific time of the day under parental supervision.

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