Effects of Video Games on Health of Players

Introduction

In this essay, we would attempt to discuss the effects of video games on the health of players. In contemporary societies, video games have become a common past time especially among adolescents. The gaming industry is booming and new consoles are introduced each year. Due to the nature of most video games, they often have negative impacts on the psychological and physical health of humans. The essay would follow the Toulmin argumentative format in which the thesis would be explained by making use of reasoning, warrants, evidences and rebuttals.

Thesis Statement

"The negative impacts of video games on health outweigh their positives".

Reasoning

In today's technologically advanced world, television continues to be the most popular form of media among adolescents. Despite, the technological advancements and availability of a number of gadgets, most video games are played through gaming consoles on television.

On the contrary, the use of television is vital to understanding its impact with respect to video games (Dill 2). In a classroom setting, educational videos are often used for teaching purposes. In fact, there seems to be a consensus among researchers that interactive media plays a

vital role in teaching. Renowned psychologist B. F. Skinner identified a number of principles in the learning paradigm i.e. Operant Conditioning.

However, video games are aimed to entertain people. The nature of most video games continues to be competitive and violent. The nature of video games has a direct influence on its players. Although, video games usually employ elements of positive reinforcement in a schedule to induce interest and habitual behavior among its players (Anderson & Bushman 353). On a positive note, video games serve as a good example for predicting motivation and in engaging adolescents in motivating tasks.

Backing

The addictive nature of video games has long been a subject of debate. The developers of most video games deny the notion and maintain a position that their video games are only meant to provide entertainment. Studies on the addictive nature of video games were initiated in the early 1980s.

Some of the most important inferences were drawn by Anderson (2001); who asserted that video games have a direct influence on the frequency of "compulsive" behaviors among players. Their study revealed that more than 13% of video game players preferred playing video games over productive activities (Anderson 773). Similarly, it was also ascertained that more people tend to invest their time and money in gaming activities.

The addictive nature and development of compulsive behavior among players was also identified by other researchers. Almost all video games have addictive tendencies (Carnagey & Anderson 882).

Brenick, Henning & Collins (2007) noticed that *"most of their teenage clients had become addictive to video games and were quite adamant about their game playing timings. Some teenagers even admitted to have stolen money to buy new games; or saving up their lunch money to buy games. He insisted that a certain level of commitment and devotion to video game playing is healthy"* (395). The research also warned against the consequences of addictive game playing and the psychological pathologies it could lead to.

Evidence

Stereotypical Portrayals

Over the past decade, the paradigm of focus in video games has shifted to the increased stereotypical portrayals of racial minorities and women. The issues of stereotypical portrayals often lead to the development of mindsets and wrongful characterizations. A positive relationship has been found among teenager involved in video games and anti-women attitudes. It has become a major concern for the developed world. Adolescence is a tender age and is vital to the personality development of youngsters. Youngsters who were exposed to video games were quite intrigued by rape myths i.e. that women enjoy sexual suppression or force and that men should dominate women in sex (Kato 113).

School Performance & Learning

Attention Deficit Disorders and learning disabilities are often associated with an increased exposure to video games. The association and the negative role played by video games

has become a subject of mass controversy. It has been ascertained that continuous exposure to video games can lead to a number of psychological issues i.e. Attention Deficit Disorders. In a study conducted with 59 children, it was affirmed that children who were continuously exposed to video games had a higher prevalence of psychological disorders (Brown, Lieberman & Gemeny 77).

Anti Social Impacts

Due to the nature of most video games, anti social tendencies have become a common occurrence among teenagers. The purpose of video game developers is to make their games appealing, intriguing and most importantly interesting. In an attempt to increase their sales and to popularize their products; they tend to follow story lines which are interesting and have violent elements in them (Kato & Beale 269). The nature of the game makes it intriguing and people are drawn to it. Often, it leads to issues in their social lives. Most importantly, teenagers and children develop a tolerance level for violence and become rigid in their attitudes which lead to social issues in their lives.

Rebuttals

Due to an increased awareness on the health impacts of video games, vast media attention has been focused on identifying the negative impacts of video games on the health of players. However, quite less attention has been paid to the positive impacts of video games on individuals. The positive impacts of video games are quite limited. The most widely employed use of video games in healthcare is their use in surgical training and to improve the motor movements of patients.

Customized games tend to be more useful in addressing the root causes in healthcare. It allows patients to adhere to the treatment regimens and assists doctors in simulating real life medical scenarios. Hence, doctors benefit from video games by replicating medical scenarios and assessing their response to certain situations. A close analysis reveals that video games have long been used with psychiatric patients since the early 1980s. Their use in treating psychological issues has evolved over the years and led to the development of customized games for different diseases. Due to their consistent use in healthcare, more scientific trials are being conducted which assess the impacts of video games in treatments. Similarly, their usage in surgical training of doctors has also increased. Recently, tailor made games were developed to train doctors in clinical settings.

Video games are quite useful in teaching. They manage to gain an individual's attention; which can prove to be quite beneficial in certain situations. For instance, they induce feelings of sportsmanship and teach attitudes which are required for winning (Lieberman 11). By intriguing players, they make people feel competent about a certain task.

Backing

Video games can be used in schools to teach employees, engineers and school children. There seems to be a growing consensus among experts that violent video games do induce aggressive tendencies and could have a negative impact on the psychosocial development of children. A comprehensive analysis of violent scenarios portrayed in video games indicates a direct association with aggressive tendencies. Researchers' have found unequivocal evidence that video games increase the likelihood of violent behavior in both short and long terms (Dill & Dill 407). Although, the impacts are often quite small, but their magnitude and prevalence is

enough to warrant a concern. Aggressive behavior among teenagers continues to be continuously associated with real life violence and juvenile crimes.

In the United States, over $22 billion dollars are spent annually on marketing and advertising drugs. An increase in the usage of substance abuse has also been associated with video games. Many competitive video games signify alcohol and drug use in their games. The premise is further supported by an analysis of social networking websites which found out that reference to substance abuse or controlled substances accounts to 40% on social media. Similarly, a consistent portrayal of tobacco use in video games and movies has made it difficult to contain smoking in the United States. The portrayal of tobacco use is also prevalent in movies. Different longitudinal studies have revealed that exposure to smoking in movies predicts initiation of smoking within 8 years (Lieberman 2).

Conclusion

All in all, the increased prevalence of video games as a favorite pastime is alarming. These games often include violence, stereotypes and hence pose a threat to the psychological health of adolescents. They tend to provide a getaway from social activities, work and school tasks. Often, an addiction to video games can lead to social isolation and have a negative impact on a person's self confidence and cognitive abilities.

The element of violence is what makes video games intriguing and enjoyable. The concept of "blood and gore" has become quite common in video games and continues to be a major selling element among video game developers. Paired with the improvements in graphics; the element of realism has become significant in video games which increases their appeal.

Hence, attention needs to be paid on the regulation of games so that a healthier future can be ensured for generations to come.

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