

THE IMPACT OF VIOLENT GAMES ON CHILDREN

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Video games have been in the market for more than 30 years¹. They are a form of entertainment, but each game is unique. In contrast to watching a movie, video games encourage a player to be an active participant. With the changing technology, video games of today call for full concentration and participation of the player². This has its own advantages and disadvantages.

One major advantage of video games is that they improve a player's manual agility, as well as their computer literacy³. Other games that are created with an educational theme may help the player to learn or master a few academic aspects. A player can also sharpen his/her critical thinking skills as well as their problem-solving abilities just by playing these video games. Children can develop their motor skills, and enhance their coordination. The disadvantages, however, tend to overshadow these advantages.

Video games are created with various themes. There are games that promote the killing of people and animals, use of drug substances, crime and general disrespect for authority, sexual exploitation and violence towards women, as well as racial, sexual, and gender discrimination. Video games may also promote the use of vulgar language, obscenities, and explicit acts⁴. All of these have a negative impact on the player. For this paper, the greater emphasis has been placed on video games that promote violence, and the effect they have on children. Studies conducted recently show that children and adolescents who play violent video games excessively tend to lose their sensitivity to violence⁵. They become immune to the horrors associated with violence.

¹ AACAP, March 2011. "Children and Video Games: Playing with Violence." *American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, No. 91. Retrieved March 30, 2013 from

http://aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/children_and_video_games_playing_with_violence

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

They also tend to imitate what they see in the games, creating games of their own from what they have seen. It may escalate to these young people adopting aggressive mannerisms⁶. Such children feel that violence solves many problems and may result to it to handle or settle their issues. Continued exposure to violent games has more of a negative impact on children and adolescents. If the child has emotional or behavioral problems or are slow learners, they are impacted by the violence depicted in these video games very quickly⁷.

Children and adolescents who are exposed to video games for long hours can become obsessed with the games. This obsession has its own set of disadvantages. Such children are not able to socialize and play with other children, since most of their time is consumed with playing video games. They also have less time to spend with their family members, or doing their class work, and other healthy and meaningful activities⁸. Spending less time studying results in poor grades at school. Such children are rarely involved in physical activities, and may end up becoming overweight or obese. Finally, children who play violent video games for long hours harbor aggressive thoughts and these are manifested in the kind of behaviors that they display in the real world.

Parents can help control their children's exposure to violent video games, thus avoiding the negative aspects that come with it⁹. They should ensure that they check the rating of violence before purchasing a game. They should also not install video game equipment in their children's rooms. It would also be of great help if they control and reduce the amount of time that children spend on the Internet and watching television and movies, in addition to playing video games¹⁰.

⁶ Gentile, D. A. & Anderson, C. A., 2003. *Violent Video Games: The Newest Media Violence Hazard*. In D. A. Gentile (Ed.), *Media violence and children*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishing.

⁷ AACAP, March 2011. "Children and Video Games: Playing with Violence." *American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, No. 91. Retrieved March 30, 2013 from http://aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/children_and_video_games_playing_with_violence

⁸ Gentile, D. A. & Anderson, C. A., 2003. *Violent Video Games: The Newest Media Violence Hazard*. In D. A. Gentile (Ed.), *Media violence and children*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishing.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ AACAP, March 2011. "Children and Video Games: Playing with Violence." *American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, No. 91. Retrieved March 30, 2013 from http://aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/children_and_video_games_playing_with_violence

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