

BEHAVIORAL EFFECTS IN RELATION TO VIDEO GAMING 1

Behavioral Effects and their causal relationship to Video Gaming

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between Behavior change and video game usage. Do people who play video games have behavior changes in any way? If so, what are they and is it a direct effect of playing that game? There is a possibility that the video game was not the cause of the change in behavior. The population certified was 53 men and women ages 18-50. These individuals were interviewed in person, and online and were asked a series of questions based on a scale. The scale rated participants' responses with the criteria: Absolutely Agree, Agree, Neutral, Absolutely Disagree and Disagree. The dependent variables were the people interviewed. Their age, sex, and type of gamer they were made up the other criteria for dependent variables. The independent variables were the people's preferences in game type, hours of gameplay, times played in a week, and even when those hours that they played were. The measurement instruments were questionnaires in person and surveys filled out online which were connected through Facebook. The interview process being done through Facebook helped to keep the reliability of demographics. The design of the study was simple. Questions were asked open-ended and the options were given to the responder. The Major findings were, at least in the case of the in-person interviews that people had varying opinions on how games affected them. The problem with in-person interviews that also presented problems when interviewing online is the fact that every person is different. The questions and criteria have not changed, but the responses do simply because no one person is the same. The study found that many individuals admit to some behavior change but will not agree that it negatively affects them. An example is that 83% of those surveyed in person (six people) said that they would consider themselves addicted to video games. The online respondents were not exactly similar in their results. Out of the forty-seven people surveyed online, 59% said that they disagreed when asked if video games changed their behavior. So it is obvious across the board that there are many differences. Not only in the response of the individuals surveyed, but in the opinions of people in general. This exact reason is why it is so difficult to study behavioral change in relation to any communication. The study done made an attempt at finding a correlation between behavior changes and video game usage. There have been no conclusive figures either supporting this fact or denying it. The only thing the researcher is certain of after this study is the inconsistency of the human element, and the fact that there is no direct link to behavior change in relation to video games.

The problem between behavior change and video games has been an ongoing debate for quite some time on a national stage. Countless shootings and acts of violence have pointed out flaws in our society. The public needs a scapegoat any time that a problem is presented, and in this case, video games are just that. One motivation and possibly a fault of this study is

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the fact that the researcher plays video games personally. More than anything however, this has been an interesting look at how when things go badly, blame is dealt out in places where it should not be. An inspiration to this study is an article by Christopher J. Ferguson, in which he explains how video games have become a moral panic for no reason. Two excellent examples of this are the Virginia Tech Shooting, and the Trolley Square shooting in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Neither of the shooters aforementioned had any contact with video games whatsoever.

Additionally, no family members or close friends indicated that video games were a link to the violence. The attacks were completely spontaneous according to authorities and everyone involved and Ferguson in his article addressed this. "It was something of a shock when

investigators concluded that Cho had little to no exposure to violent video games" Ferguson

said in regards to the Virginia Tech Shooter Seung-Hui Cho. The same is true for shooters from countless other incidents in which video games cannot be blamed. The issue of video games

being blamed for violence does however have something against it. the Columbine shooting,

which took place on April 20, 1999, is one of the main reasons why video games have been

blamed for these tragedies. Eric David Harris and Dylan Bennett Klebold were the shooters at

Columbine, and avid players of the game Doom. Doom is a violent game where the player

shoots others and has no problem with it as he moves through different sceneries and levels.

This instance alone has given proponents of this idea nearly endless information for their point

of view. The issue being overlooked here is what kind of people these were, as opposed to what

kind of media they consumed. It is Nature vs. Nurture in the purest sense. The shooters in this

situation were already very deranged in their thinking before they ever touched a video game.

The game did not cause their behavior, and if it did, then why did the other millions of people

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who played it not behave in the same way? The existing knowledge in the case of this study is the fact that we are what we consume. The media which we let influence our life translates into how we act, talk, and live. As obvious as this is, the correlation between the two is not always direct. Still, there is no question that the media we use does affect us. The question is now then, how does it affect us?

1. Baldaro, B., Tuozi, G., Codispoti, M., Montebanocci, O., Barbagli, F., Trombini, E., & Rossi, N.

I chose this source to see the effects on gamers, and to know what medical professionals are saying about video games. I also chose this source because your heart rate and blood pressure go up in sports and everyone is just fine with that. While athletes playing sports is no problem to the outside world because it changes how their body reacts physically, it is a problem when it pertains to video games. The stigma against video games is a strong one and needs to be examined.

Relevance: The relevance to my topic is that this source examines physical changes before, during, and after gameplay. The figures do not lie; people who play violent games have a higher blood pressure and other physical changes. The challenge is however, not to single out video games and to test similar activities that we in our society are ok with. We should test video games and other violent physical activities side by side. Then at the end of the study prove which is worse for the user. The purpose of this source is to clarify there is a problem, but that it is not isolated to just video games.

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2. Brady, S. S.

We are taught, argues Brady, that to accomplish our goal there must be violence. The media that establishes this thought process however is not video games, but other media. Media such as war movies, crime dramas on TV, and even sports are listed as the primary cause for aggression. Not only does it make the person watching it more aggressive, it makes this individual accepting of violence in others. This is not always a negative thing, but it can be. The subjects interviewed in this study were more approving of military defense, aggressive military intervention, and punitive criminal justice policies. The point this illustrates is one we have known all along, in men especially, violence is the solution to nearly any problem. The rationale behind this is demonstrated in the methods of the study.

Relevance: When anything goes wrong in regards to violence in America it is automatically assumed that a violent video game had something to do with it on some level. The average person in this country is inundated with violence on many levels and we choose daily to let it affect us. A person who is pre-disposed to being violent will be violent no matter how many times he plays a game.

3. Ferguson, C. J.

Ferguson talks about how in the wake of the columbine shooting there was moral panic surrounding video games. The reason being was that the shooters had played doom, a popular violent game. The author goes on to discuss how other shooters had no video game usage whatsoever and it had nothing to do with it. The better argument is for the full examination of their mind to determine what other factors there are.

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Relevance: The main emphasis is that we cannot just blame video games for all of our societal problems in relation to violence. Ferguson notes that the United States in the days after Columbine and Virginia Tech fell into a Moral Panic. This is what brought on the false accusations he says and this is why video games to this day have a bad reputation. The relevance in this source is to further solidify the fact that video games are not, and have never been the only problem in regards to behavior.

4. NNIE JIN, S. A.

Jin Nnie talks in this article about how video games of a pro-social nature can contribute to the person's real personality. She says that in games where you are given the opportunity to be apathetic or empathize with an individual, you are more likely to help somebody. Nnie studied violent and non-violent games, and in each case, the people's response was equally unselfish. There has never been any thought given to the idea that video games can actually help you as a person. This study instead shows the positive effects video games have on individuals and how it can better their people skills.

Relevance: The idea that every person who plays a video game is anti-social is a thing of the past. Many people in many different situations enjoy playing video games and have nothing wrong with them. People considered to be normal by anyone's standards every single day get online and play games.

5. Lessons We've Learned from Society. *Library Technology Reports*.

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The article *Lessons We've Learned from Society* talks about how our society is worrying about the wrong things. The Library Technology Journal says other problems in our society are not addressed while violence is singled out. It goes on to say that video gaming students were more social and had more civic awareness than the non-gamers. Valuable social lessons such as sharing, encouragement of others, and being un-selfish in general were all discovered in this article because of video games. *Library Technology reports* that we are not addressing serious issues in our society while we dither over non-threatening issues such as video games.

Relevance: The study done here proves that when used in a structured setting, video games can promote positive attitudes and behaviors in kids of any age. The Results of this study prove exactly that. For boys, only one problem behavior existed. The problem was that boys hit other boys regardless of video game type. The fact is that boys are more violent than girls physically. A young girl is more likely to attack the reputation of her enemy. The point is, video games are just like another violent game in middle schools, Dodge ball. If a teacher is present and governs proceedings, everything is done in a safe and fair way.

6. Libraries, Videogames, and Civic Engagement. *Library Technology Reports*.

A local library in Alabama, run by Beth Wheeler Dean, has video games to rent in their library. Dean argues that video games can be a positive socializing agent. She saw that they built teamwork, and positive reinforcement was given to every player when they played in the library. The library even hosted a tournament for gamers, in which thirty children showed up. This report from the author's library shows the positive effects of organized gaming and how it

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can be a bridge to learning. The environment in the library was so pleasant and welcoming thanks to video games, people began to check out books again.

Relevance: This report from an actual library by one of its own employees shows the importance of perspective on video games. Beth Wheeler Dean gave video games a chance most would not give them, and it changed her facility for the better. The positive environment for the kids, as well as learning is just one of many reasons video games should not be stereotyped as all negative.

7. Saleem, M., Anderson, C. A., & Gentile, D. A.

This study done at Iowa state university continues to point out that some video games help us become better people. The term pro-social gaming is brought up and is a valid point. The article says that between violent, pro-social, and neutral games there is no change in behavior. While Anderson acknowledges that personal variables could be a reason for non-violent individuals, he notes that all of the people surveyed had the same response.

Relevance: this study which was done with adults shows how no matter what the age, a video game can calm you down, and make you a more sociable human being. The other studies like it showed the socializing capability in Children, but the same principles apply here. When given an opportunity to help others most said they would in a video game setting or in real life. They also claimed to have a pro-social outlook more so than non-gamers.

8. Wei, R.

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I chose this article because it has massive amounts of statistical data about gaming around the world. The country of China has historically been very involved in the making and playing of video games. The study of statistics here tells gamers what we already know, that countries like China, the United States, and Korea are constantly playing games.

Relevance: I will use the statistics discovered by Wei in my research paper to show exactly the video game usage of children in the United States, Great Britain, China and many other countries.

The method in this survey utilized the website survey monkey, and also some in-person interviews. The surveys on survey monkey encompassed forty-seven individuals ages 18-50. There were forty-five men, and two women who responded to the surveys. The in-person interviews involved six male students, ages 18-21. The survey conducted in person did not exclude women in any way. The survey was done in an open area in the dorms with Pizza and drinks provided, it just so happened that no women participants showed up. This could be attributed to the fact that the survey was spread by word of mouth to all of the participants. The materials were paper and pencils used for the in-person interviews. There were no materials for the online surveys, because all the participants just used a computer. The procedure included respondents sitting at a table with pieces of paper. The in-person interviews were recorded on tables with all the individuals sitting next to each other. This presented problems with reliability despite the researcher's sincerest efforts to keep the study valid. The respondents were told to answer to the best of their abilities all of the questions on a

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ten question survey. They were also told not to talk with other participants which were not 100% effective.

The analysis was broken down into percentages from Survey Monkey and the in-person interviews. Complications were encountered during the in-person interviews but did not exist with the online studies. These complications consisted of respondents talking to one another, interruptions from outside noises, and just psychological noise. Since there was a significant amount of noise of many kinds, the respondents were told to give the best answers they could. The reliability of the in-person interviews is not as high as the online interviews because the respondents were talking to each other. The most reliable survey in this study, the online, gave much more honest and better insight into behavior. The control in this study was the way in which respondents were asked the questions and what they were about.

The results of this study were easy to quantify because they were presented in percentages from the online interviews, as well as the in-person interviews. The questions asked in both surveys in the study used the scale agree, strongly agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The percentages then came from the top two answers in any of these categories. An example is, if seven people said they agreed they were addicted to video games and two said they disagreed out of nine people, the percentage of the answers would then be 77% agreed and 23% disagreed. This method of measuring results kept the numbers simple and accurate. Besides using percentages to measure the results, most answers had an "other" box. A place for respondents to write a response of up to 150 words describing their video game habits or just any comment in general. The results are reliable because of the fact that they

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used individual responses in addition to percentages to analyze any change in behavior. The respondents had mixed responses on whether or not video games changed their behavior for the negative or positive. The shortcoming of the study in the case of the respondents is there were only fifty-three total respondents. There needed to be significantly more respondents in person for accuracy, but the researcher in this case found it hard to bring people together for interviews. A problem that would be fixed if this study were done again would be how the in-person interviews were conducted and how many respondents there were.

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