Do violent video games promote aggression and intolerance in childrens behavior e...

Introduction3

Introduction

Video games are a form of entertainment. They are highly interactive because video games push players to become immersed in the game itself on a physical and emotional level. In 2010, the Kaiser Foundation conducted a survey and came up with the finding that 97% of American youth of ages between 8 and 18 years devote a substantial amount of their time, an average of 8 hours per week, to playing video games (KFF, 2010). Several studies show that most of the video games popular among the youth are all violent in content. This paper will show that continuous exposure to violent video games promotes an increased level of aggression and intolerance in children's behavior.

Discussion

While video games provide a high sense of amusement and diversion for players, they are also touted as one of the reasons why teens display more aggressive behaviors towards their peers. All these video games show various characters engaging in criminal activities such as committing violence and bloodbath, hurling abuses, fornicating with prostitutes, unleashing violence towards children and women, taking drugs, killing

human and animals, and perpetrating every conceivable and inconceivable anti-social activity. The popularity of this kind of violent video games is so much among the youth that when the Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 was released in 2009, it collected a staggering $550 million within a week of its release. When the Call of Duty: Black Ops was released, it generated a whopping $360 million in a single day, breaking all-time records (Warburton and Braunstein, 2012). In the midst of such rising popularity of video games, one question that is debated over and over again is the impact of violent video games on children and young adults.

Numerous research studies conducted to find out the impacts of video games on young minds reveal that one of the severe impacts of violent video games is an increase in aggression and intolerance in children's behavior. However, the results of the studies as regards whether or not violent video games lead to aggression or intolerance have been mixed. While some studies show a correlation between video games addiction with an increased aggression, others do not show any linkage at all.

Stand 1: Video Games Cause Aggression and Violence

The influence of video games on aggression and violence is better judged by taking into account the research findings of some of the prominent psychologists in this area. Although there are many studies showing a connection between increased aggression in children's behavior and video game addiction, one of the notable psychologists and professors whose research is highly regarded and widely discussed is Craig A. Anderson. Anderson, in his research studies, has shown that continuous exposure to

violent video games results in increased aggression and intolerance. According to him, video games have far more severe impact on young minds than that of television, because television programs are passive in nature in which the viewers do not participate in the action, but video games are active in nature in which the players participate in the act of murder, rapes and abuses, even though virtually (Warburton and Braunstein, 2012). If the game is the first person action game, then the player himself takes the virtual image of the violent character who perpetrates severe crimes on screen. If the game is the third person action game, then the gamer takes the charge of manipulating and controlling the actions of the violent character. Anderson opines that " children and adolescents who play a lot of [violent] games change over time; they start to see aggressive solutions as being more reasonable" (Rettner, 2014). By taking part in the virtual violent activities and unleashing violence on screen on behalf of the virtual violent character, they imbibe the central character's violent characteristics within themselves and try to find a solution through violence in real life also. However, Anderson's study has a few limitations. He did not explore whether genetic construction, family history and circumstances have any major role to play in the increased aggression or violence or not. Also, he did not examine the effect of video game competitiveness on the increased level of aggression.

Stand 2: Video Games Do Not Cause Aggression and Violence

According to C. J. Ferguson, another psychologist and researcher at the Stentson University in DeLand, Fla, however, video games do not cause

violence and lead to aggression in children. In his studies, he did not find any correlation between aggressive and violent behavior with video games. According to him, some people are born aggressive and have a genetic predisposition to aggression, and when these people are raised amidst family violence, they are more likely to engage in violent behavior under any environmental strain such as financial and social problems, divorce, legal troubles and others. The exposure to violent video games might work like a stylistic catalyst for this kind of individual, who might copy the form or the execution style of violence from the video games, but it does not mean that if the exposure to violent video games is removed from this individual's life, he will not commit violence. He will then adopt another style or form of violence (Ferguson et al, 2008).

According to another set of researchers, P. J. C. Adachi and T. Willoughby (2011), more than the content of the video games, it is the level of competitiveness and frustration of not reaching the desired level or goal in a game that lead to increased aggression. These researchers believe that irrespective of violent or non-violent games, if the intensity of competition or the difficulty level is high in a game, then no matter how non-violent the game is, it might generate a sense of immense frustration in the avid game players, leading to aggressive behavior.

Reasons that Prove the Relationship between Video Games and Aggression

Taking into account all the views expressed in the available literatures, it can be said that directly or indirectly violent video games have a behavioral influence on young people. As per studies conducted, young people who play

a lot of vicious video games have a higher chance of showing violent behavior in later life. Most of the school shooters in recent times are found to be avid violent video game players. For example, Steven Phillip Kazmierczak, who shot five people dead and injured several others in 2008 at the Northern Illinois University, was an avid video game player (Ferguson, 2008). Even those denying any direct correlation between violent video games and aggressive behavior have given the opinion that violent video games act as catalyst.

Prolonged exposure to violent video games may bring out the aggressive behavior in a child who has inherited the aggression through genetic traits. Although it is not easy to establish that they would have shown reduced levels of aggression had not they been exposed to violent video games, the fact, however, that violent video games have some impact on children's behavior cannot be denied. It is a well-researched fact that television impacts people's lives by influencing their buying behavior, fashion perception, and health consciousness. It is not uncommon for children to try emulating a stunt they have seen in a television program in real life and thereby, expose themselves to danger and cause their own deaths. If a passive medium like television makes so much influence to the youngsters' lives, then there is no reason to deny the fact that violent video games, which keep the players more involved by allowing them participation in virtual actions, impact their minds negatively.

Conclusion

In this age of technology, more and more young people are getting addicted to video games from an early age. With exceptional representation of characters, great graphics and an engaging storyline, gamers often get addicted to video games. It appears by taking into account different views of the researchers that violent video games lead to increased level of aggression and intolerance in children's behavior. Violent video games either directly increase the aggressive behavior of a player or indirectly help them bring out the aggression they already possess through genetic or other environmental factors.

It is not easy to devise a solution for such a problem. It is difficult to just take away video games from the children. Violent video game players are often addicts, and hence, they need parental support to get out of this addiction. It is important for parents to limit the total amount of time children spend on video games per week. If a child has no control over how many hours he plays video games, then he becomes more and more addicted with every passing day. It is also important for avid gamers and their parents to reduce the amount of money spent on video games. Finally, it is important for the violent video gamers to understand that extreme level of addiction for anything is a disease, which should be treated with medical help. Overall, it is a problem of the society, and therefore, collective efforts are required to eradicate it from its root. Video game makers should focus on making less violent video games. Parents should responsibly monitor how many hours their children spend on playing video games or whether or not they spend money on playing these games. Finally, the medical community should come

up with methods and practices to help video game addicted individuals effectively.

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