

Introduction role-play  
in various scenarios.  
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## **Introduction**

Video games have exhibited exponential growth in the past few decades. They have advanced from their humble origins in the computer lab to a contemporary status as one of the leaders in the multibillion dollar global entertainment industry (Newman 1). Most of the popular video games in the present times are characterized by their ability to allow players to role-play in various scenarios.

Owing to the market appeal of violence, most of the scenarios involve acts of violence and destruction which are performed by the player on screen. Concerns have been raised as to the effect that this overexposure and subsequent desensitization to violence is having on people especially bearing in mind that video games are quickly becoming the most fashionable pass time activity for children in the developed world. Arguments have been forwarded that the violence in video games is directly responsible for the rise in violence by young people. On the other hand, other arguments propose that personal responsibility takes precedence and as such video games do not result in any violent behavior. As can be deduced from this, there are various opposing views on the effect that violent video games have on people. This paper shall examine several of the arguments raised so as to draw a conclusion as to whether video games actually do cause violence in people.

The paper shall also discuss the various arguments advanced by proponents and opponents to consider their merit.

## **Arguments Proposing that Video Games Cause Violence**

One of the factors that make video games especially prone to leading to violence in real life is the high level of engagement that video games have.

Funk et al. theorizes that the intense engagement may increase the probability that game behaviors will generalize outside the game situation as a result of the active participation that video games require of the gamer (34). Qualitative researches further on show that children who were exposed to violent video games engaged in fantasy play's in which they copied the actions of the violent video characters.

This effectively demonstrates that the high involvement of video games results in youths desiring to play out the violent actions in real life. This inevitably leads to the perpetration of violence by people as a result of the influence of video games. Video game enthusiasts negate his point by arguing that people have the capability to differentiate simulations from real life. While this may be the case, it does not take into consideration the high impressionability of youths and the influence that media and in particular video games have on the lives of people. The correlation between video-game violence and increased aggression amongst the youths is unnerving. Anderson and Bushman hypothesize that it is no coincidence that recent cases of high school and campus violence are in most cases perpetrated by individuals who habitually played violent video games (353). Studies indicate that the reason for increased aggression with increased exposure to violence scenes is because aggression is largely based on the learning function of the brain and as such, each violent episode is in essence one more learning trial

(Dill 83). However, it may be argued that aggression is a function of nature and video games cannot influence a non-violent person into violence.

While these assertions may be true, Anderson and Bushman demonstrate that video violence lead to the reinforcement of aggressive behavior which in some cases leads to full blown cases of violence and destruction (353). One of the logical consequences of exposure to violence is desensitization; which implies the elimination of cognitive, emotional or even behavioral response to violence (Funk et al. 25). An interesting fact with regard to desensitization to violence is that it occurs in subtle and minute quantities and one is seldom aware of its occurrence. In other words, engaging in violent video games results in an increase for tolerance for violent behavior in real life.

Supporters of video games assert that video games are in no way the only source of violent material as media and even real-life experiences contain some episodes of violence. As such, it stands to reason that video games should not be held accountable for desensitization to violence as it is evident that there are many other avenues through which violence is presented to people.

However, research indicates that the high interaction levels of video games leads to blunted empathic responding and higher emotional desensitization that by any other media due to the active involvement of a person as they play. This subsequently results in stronger pro-violence attitudes which have been repeatedly blamed on the prevalence of violent videos.

## **Arguments Opposing that Video Games Cause Violence**

While proponents of video games as a major cause of violence among youths point out that these games represent violence and murder as “cool and fashionable, it should be noted that video games are not the only media through which such notions are spread.

Ferguson highlights the fact that violence as entertainment has always been an aspect of mainstream media and as such, video games and their effects should not be viewed in isolation (13). As such, violence in youths should take into consideration the various TV and Newspaper presentations of violence and Hollywood films romanticizing of violence instead of laying the blame principally on video games. Owing to the many studies which propose the negative effects of video games, it would logically follow that laws would be put in place to ensure that this social vice is controlled.

However, this has not been the case and production of violent video games continues to be rife. Ferguson documents that despite the research on the effects of media violence on children and the subsequent findings that media violence is mostly detrimental to children’s psychology, there are no enforcement mechanisms in place that deter the sale of violent games to children (13). This lack of legislation is mostly because the various censorship laws proposed have been challenged in courts mostly on constitutional and scientific grounds. Ferguson highlights that some judges particularly criticized opponents of video games who were blamed for biased presentation of the existing research on effects of video game violence therefore greatly decreasing the objectivity and credibility of these anti-game scholars (14). Opponents of media violence point to the rise in crime <https://assignbuster.com/introduction-role-play-in-various-scenarios-owing-to/>

waves during the 1970's and 1980's which was largely assumed to be caused by violence in television. Subsequently, anti-game scholars indicate that the same could happen as a result of video violence. Ferguson reiterates that this is a fallacy since records indicate that violent crimes in the U.

S. population decreased in the 1990s, which is when the violent video games began to become popular and increasingly violent as the years progressed due to technological advances (13). As such, the assertion that video games result in increased violence cannot be backed up by data therefore suggesting that violent video games may be more benign than is currently thought. However, opponents of video games point out that the mere fact that violent crimes decreased at the same time that video games came into the picture is hugely coincidental and does not indicate that violent video games have no negative effect on people.

## **Discussion**

The prevalence of video games in the lives of younger age groups is evident and as such, the impact that this exposure may have on them is of great significance. It has been suggested that there is a correlation between violent video games and real life violence. Supporters of video games propose that this correlation is not causation but rather, they argue that the fact is that violent children prefer to play violent games.

As such, video games do not create violent people as opponents of video games suggest. While this argument may hold some truth, numerous research findings indicate that video games lead to an increase in the violent levels of the people who engage in the games. It is therefore

plausible that while video games are played by violent children, the aggression level of such people is significantly increased as a result of the violence in the video games. The effects of exposure to violent video games are also undoubtedly higher to the younger age groups since they are still developing their moral values and therefore are more impressionable. As such, a violent game which may have little effect on an adult can have lasting impact on children whose moral reasoning principles are still being molded (Funk 34). However, despite the negative sentiments that are associated with video games, they present a great means of telling stories to the youth. As such, the socially responsible thing to do would be to endorse and encourage behaviors that are sociable through these games (Kahne, Middaugh & Evans 8).

In addition to the alleged increase in violence levels, video game violence has also been blamed for frequent reduction of pro-social behavior by the players. This greatly negates the civil potential of the games and leads to a prevalence of anti-social behavior. From this, it is clear that the negative effect of violent video games is far reaching and not only limited to aggressive behavior and an increase in violence by youths. While there are many experts who criticize the existing violent video game research literature, their credibility is uncertain since most of this experts working with or for the video game industries. It would therefore be absurd to expect them to make declarations that would be detrimental to their industry. On the other hand, anti-game experts are mostly psychologists and scholars who have no vested interest in the results. This greatly adds to the credibility

of they studies, most of which indicate that there is a strong relationship between youth violence and video game violence.

## **Conclusion**

Video games are an ever-present youth experience and they can offer wide ranges of experiences to the individual.

As has been demonstrated by the arguments presented in this paper, video games can be used to promote certain notions. This paper highlights the reality that violence can in fact be promoted by use of violent video games. From this paper, it is clear that the youth are the ones who are most susceptible to being made violent and it is therefore the obligation of parents to ensure that the exposure of their children to these harmful games is limited. However, it should be remembered that games can also be used for nonviolent and even educational purposes. Game designers should therefore be urged to create less violent video games and rather focus on the benign and beneficial facet of video games. By doing this, the tremendous educative power that the games wield can be harnessed for the betterment of the society.

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