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Violent Video Games and Children

While technology is useful in countless aspect of our daily lives, we have to evaluate both the positive and negative effects, especially on children who are exposed to various of content including violent video games on their iPad, tablets, laptops, etc. Because it is a popular form of entertainment. As technology continues to advance, children have more access to electronic devices that lead them to become more exposed to violent video games, which negatively impact children’s behaviors.

A number of researchers have revealed that the aggressiveness level of children heightened when exposed to violent computer games, there are factors which cause them to be more aggressive than the others. From the article, *“*Priming Effect of Computer Game Violence on Children’s Aggression Levels”by Jia-Kun Zheng and Qian Zhang, the two have investigated how aggression developed from playing violent computer games differ by gender and trait aggressiveness level. They referenced on multiple researchers and scholars on those differences and their studies of the two variation.

Bingenheimer, Brennan, and Earls (2005) ran a 2-year longitudinal study to test out their hypothesis that children who play violent computer games are more likely to show stronger aggression compared to those who do not. In the study, they selected two computer games for participants and they will have to rate how they felt or experience while playing. One of them is called *Virtual Cop2*, which “is a person-shooting game in which players kill gangsters by shooting them, and it features scenes with blood, verbal assault, and physical fight content” (Zheng & Qian, 2016). The second game they have selected was called *Fight Landlord*, this is a card game which involves with shedding and gambling and it is one of the most popular games played in China. The game is played among three people with one pack or card, including two differentiated jokers and the objective of the game is to be the first player to have no cards left. As you can see these two games have a huge difference in content wise or violence image and participants are to describe how they felt afterwards. All participants were to play these two games. According to Zheng and Qian, they mentioned that they chose these two particular games “because the children had not played them before, thus effectively avoiding familiarity and practiced effects and assuring the validity of the experiment” (2016).

The method they used to study whether or not violent video games have bad influence on children was by “recruiting 220 children (50% females, 50% males) from two of the elementary schools in southwest China to participate in the pilot study. Their ages ranged from 9 to 12 years and approximately 90% were of Han ethnicity.” They can say that this urban China was the main representative of this study because this study was taken in urban China. The video games contained both the English and Chinese subtitles from an English audio. The procedure for the study was that participants play each games for approximately 15 minutes and after they had to complete a seven-item scale to test the game’s savagery in relation to the extent of pleasantness, excitement, violent content, violent images, fear, interest, and reality. While they are playing, research conductors observe their feelings and attention of all their participants.

In results, those who played *Virtual Cop2* rated much higher score for violent content compared to the game, *Fight Landlord* (Zheng & Qian, 2016). They also did a study to test gender differences and their attitude toward each game. Females adolescents have indicated that *Virtual Cop2* was less pleasant, exciting, interesting, and causing more fear compared to males. It is predictable because boys are more attracted to things that are riskier and violent content and on the other hand girls tend to rely on empathy when making decisions (Toussaint and Webb, 2005). Another factor that affects the aggression level when playing violent computer games is the personality and traits of that person and research shows that “adolescents with high trait aggressiveness show significantly more aggression than do those with low trait aggressiveness (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Zhang & Zhang, 2014).

Another similar study on violent video games was conducted in Baghdad city of primary school children. They collected data from 55 different primary schools that includes 1000 students (68.2% boys and 31.8% girls). They concluded that 47.6% of children revealed that their favorite video games consist of violent content, mostly boys. The findings that are mentioned in the article written by Saba Dhiaa and Waleed A. Tawfeeq are not surprising because in the world today we are bombarded by mass medias; television, videogames, cell phones (Ray & Jat, 2010). I am very engaged with the fact that in Iraq, children were encouraged to play video games, using internet, mobile phones and electronic media because it was a way for them to keep themselves from being killed by bombings that have made the streets unsafe to spend their leisure time out door due to terrorism. Consuming media was rather a safe zone for their case (Parkin, 2013). Because of this restriction for children in Iraq to go out and practice outdoor activities, the very first course of action to spend their leisure time is by enjoying television, movies, video games, cell phones, and computer games (Al-Obaidi et al, 2009).

Like the article written by Zheng and Qian (2016), Dhiaa and Tawfeeq (2014) touched upon the preferences of boys and girls when it comes to video games. The findings from other reported similar results for this preference matter. Boys prefer video games that involve with violent such as “shooting, killing, fighting, blood and gore, strong language, sexual content, use of drugs and alcohol while favorite video games for girl were girls’ games; clothing, fashion, cooking, hair style” (Funk et al, 2004). In results of boys’ preference to play violent video games, this confirmed that they also watch violent TV programs more than girls do (Arnett, 2007). Because of this differences in video games, “television is becoming gender-stereotyped with age. These increased exposures to stereotypic information are likely to influence stereotypic conceptions about gender roles” (Morgan & Shanahan, 1997). It brought to my attention that not only does violent video games influence children’s behaviors, but it also influences the way children see the world, specifically their roles in society when they age.

There are some ways to which parents can do to decrease their children from consuming way too much media, particularly violent video games. They can restrict their children’s playing time by not providing television in their kids’ room. Because having a television in their own rooms will give them the huge opportunity to select whichever video games they desired to play and as research shows, boys will most likely prefer video games that contain violent content. By dismissing TV, they will, of course likely to not be exposed to such violent content. According to Dhiaa and Tawfeeq, parents “should select educational games, prosocial games instead of violent one enhance other activities such as drawing, painting, sporting, playing musical instrument, carving, and share them in house works to spend their leisure time” (2016). Parents play a very important role in this aspect of their children’s lives because they have the power to limit or dismiss things that aren’t appropriate for their kid’s age. Many times, parents will have to hand electronic devices to their kids just to make them behave better, but if parents set strict standards and expectations of their children, it will help in the future with behavioral matter. Schools also can help minimize the exposure of violent computer games by creating a democratic classroom environment and promoting peer ecology.

**Works Cited**

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