A Socio-Psychological Analysis Of The Effects Of Digital Gaming On Teenagers

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Abstract

The main impetus of the present paper is primarily to assess the Socio-Psychological effects of digital gaming on teenagers. This paper, therefore, aims to analyze the changed behaviour among teenagers due to their attachment to digital and online gaming. An attempt is also made in this article to identify any impact on their educational performance due to their increased interest in digital and online gaming. Similarly, this research article also attempts to find out the effect of digital/online gaming on teenagers' cognitive behaviour and whether it helps to develop their computer skills, as most teenagers in today's generation are indulged in digital and/or online gaming. In this regard an attempt to draw suggestions and measures for the parents for focusing on teens' overall personality development, first.

Introduction

The demand and addiction for both the gaming population and the internet are significantly increasing with time. The modern era is the age of technology; thus, playing games online has become a common trend among teenagers. Hence the craze for digital gaming is increasing throughout the globe. However, the negative effect opens doors for various side effects that damage teenager and their familial relations. Digital/online gaming has replaced the playground and street games among teenagers, and their passion for "digital gaming addiction" is growing and used excessively and uncontrollably. Digital gaming has been recognized as one of the severe mental disorders which are marked by depression, anxiety and mental illness by WHO in the year 2018 and more recently gaming disorder has been listed under "disorders due to addictive behaviour" in the final draft of the 11th revision of International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11). The Draft was presented to World health Assemble in May 2019 and has been put into effect from January 2022. Digital gaming activates the brain cells to release chemicals that create an uncontrollable urge among teenagers to play more games.

Parents, here, are also responsible for these negative side effects. This article discusses the impact that digital gaming has on the Socio-Psychological health of teenage. The possible reasons that led to teen addiction to digital gaming have been discussed, along with the ways that affect teenagers' mental health. The role of the parents is pivotal in influencing and encouraging the gaming pattern of their children as well as helping teenagers to overcome this addiction and save them from any disorder. It is equally true that digital gaming also helps in the cognitive development and learning of teenagers comprising of high-quality games that are increasingly growing among teenagers. Teenagers, mainly ranging from the age of 13 to 18, are highly exposed to digital gaming platforms. According to a study conducted by İbrahim in 2019, it was revealed that in 64% of the 4000 households surveyed, at least one person in the household is engaged in the digital gaming for at least three to four hours a week and that nearly 30% of the players belonged to the teenage group. Two-thirds of the parents in the UK played digital games with their children weekly and perceived digital gaming as beneficial. On one hand, the survey indicated that children in the UK under the age of 8 played interactive games online for at least 25 minutes. But on the other hand, children between the age group of 8 to 18 played games for at least 1 hour, 25 minutes, daily. As per the studies, it was also found that 74% of teenagers used digital/online gaming for instruction that is mainly related to educational games. Therefore, digital and online gaming impacts teenagers in information processing. Digital/online gaming results in both positive and negative impacts on teenagers. Digital/online gaming helps **improve teenagers' cognitive function**, which helps strengthen their mental ability by surging and focusing on the neurotransmitter. Online gaming **strengthens the brain circuits** that provide the ability for teenagers to make decisions. Online gaming helps train the brain with the proper precision that helps create accurate judgments. The **hand and the eye combination function** help improve the coordination required for playing these games successfully. Multiplayer gaming helps in enhancing **teamwork** the skill of collaboration is essential for teenagers in performing their day-to-day activities.
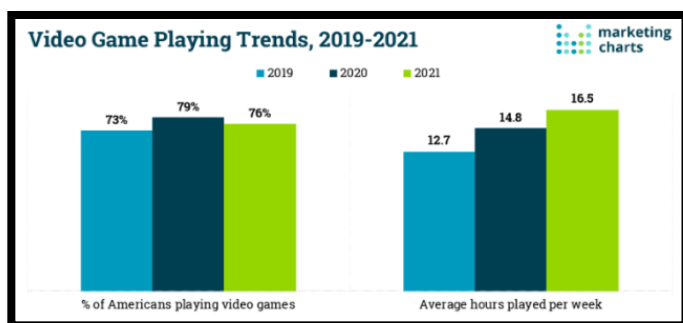

Figure 1: Video Gaming playing trends among Teenagers

(Source: Royal society publishing, 2021)

Digital gaming affects teenagers negatively as it promotes **aggressive behaviour** due to the violent content and form of online gaming. It creates a bad vision in the mind of the Teenager, and

they see society in the same picture. Online gaming promotes **the feeling of loneliness** among teenagers as they spend most of the time playing online games and do not socialize much with their families and friends, which makes them feel alone all the time. The teenagers **learn wrong values** due to the depiction of the woman as a weaker and sexually proactive character. Thus, teenagers behave badly toward women. The **mental health disorders** such as anxiety and depression are caused by digital gaming, impacting the mental health of teenagers.

Addiction to digital games

Addiction to digital/online gaming increases with time and affects teenagers in various ways. One of the possible reasons for the popularity of digital gaming among teenagers may be the low cost of these **digital games** available over the internet. As observed by Namli and Demir (2020), the average games are presented to teenage at a cost as lower as $70 and $100. Thus, any teenager can easily approach to buy fun without breaking their pockets or having to ask for money from parents.

The main benefit that digital gamers have from playing online games is their ability to connect to people that share similar love for digital gaming. Furthermore, as opined by Serada et al. (2021), teenagers spend hours gaining digital rewards and trying to beat the new levels by proceeding ahead in the games that help them earn the points of the game. Thus, to **level up** in the digital gaming, teenage plays to the extent that extends their time the playing hours that engages the deeper into the game as they find it great value for money. This is one of the simple ways that help teenagers get hooked up to matches.

Teenagers are subjected to bullying at school, which is one of the common aspects of teenage life. Thus, the teenagers that are struggling socially find an escape in the digital world by engaging themselves in digital gaming. The digital community helps in **providing acceptance and belonging** to the teenage struggling (Passmore et al. 2018). The gaming clans and the digital gaming groups within online gaming create a sense of acceptability among teenagers. Online gaming acts as a second life for teenagers that help them make the image and personality they want. It serves as a real escape for the teenagers from the real world that helps turn their weak reputation into a good one.

The **insecurity** among the teenagers related to **their appearances and personality** in the real world provides an escape for the teenagers. As per the view of Chia (2019), the population of female gamers in the digital gaming world is increasing although teenagers struggle with the girls in the real world; they are all playing against each other.

The **feeling of dominance** is one of the leading reasons that have caused the growing craze for digital gaming among teenagers. Some students are not good at studies or any sports. The constant bullying and the feeling of inferiority among the teenagers affect the psychological health of the teenagers (Rantala et al. 2020). They do not feel confident enough to engage in social activities and restrict themselves from social gatherings. Thus, digital gaming provides the sense of conquering the digital opponents in the gaming that make them feel dominated. Therefore, to overcome their inferiority, teenagers enter digital gaming.
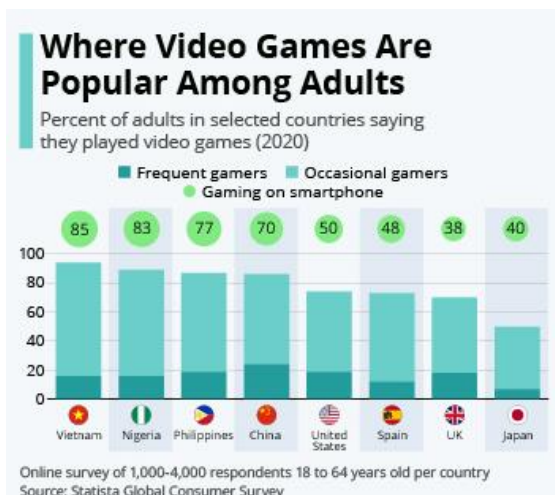
Figure 2: Popularity of Video Games among Adults

(Source: Statista, 2021)

The way digital gaming has affected the mental health of teens

The negative consequences and the health impact that digital gaming has on teenagers are growing with the expansion of the community of gaming players. The statistical and diagnostic manual of mental disorders, in its fifth edition, defined internet gaming disorder as one of the serve mental disorders that are classified in the international classification of diseases. As stated by Shah et al. (2018), there is a correlation between digital gaming and the psychological health of teenagers that is having a negative effect on the functioning the teenagers. The predominant role of digital gaming is risking the education of teenagers. Thus, they are less focused on attaining their career objectives, thereby promoting **lower social skills** for the teenagers to develop (Xu et al. 2020). Furthermore, the existing literature indicates that digital gaming leads to increased anxiety and depression levels among teenagers caused by excitement and stress level that is built during their involvement in the game, leading them to high heartbeats and high blood pressure levels.

Digital gaming affects the psychological health of teenagers, i.e., **damaging their minds along with their bodies**. The violent content of digital gaming implies that teenagers intend to get exposed to violence in the real world or become victims of violent actions performed by other teenagers. Post-traumatic stress disorder is caused by digital gaming that is related to the poor mental health outcome that is the after-effect of anxiety and depression created during the game. Moreover, digital and online gaming leads to **mental illness** that affects the daily lives of teenagers. Such gaming is considered one of the disorders that arise due to the pattern of repetitive gaming and teenagers loses control of their gaming behaviour. This causes the teenagers to prioritize their interest to continue playing games and consequently, it causes the teenagers to disengage from their social life and their relationship(s) with their families.

Internet/online gaming is a disorder that is an addictive behaviour that causes various psychological and mental health issues ultimately leading to fatigue, loneliness, and negative self-esteem in teenagers. This results in poor academic achievement in teenagers which is also related to social problems. As stated by Lee et al. (2018), digital gaming improves the mental well-being

of teenagers as some of the games are designed in a way that flourishes the mental disorder of the teenage resulting in high energy and their mental well-being. Digital gaming identifies the strength of the exciting games that help in generate a positive effect contributing to the social functioning of the teenage. Digital gaming helps teenagers in accessing a friendlier gaming environment that helps in shifting from the solitary state of gaming to the multiple player environments (Savci et al. 2021). This is also helping the technology to flourish focusing more on the positive effects of gaming that helps in contributing to the emotional stability among the teenagers. Digital gaming helps in reducing the emotional disturbance that helps in relieving the stress among the teenagers by providing relaxation.

Role of parents

The pros and the cons related to online gaming for teenagers can be evaluated by the parents by measuring the various aspect of gaming that helps their children enjoy their game without causing any problem.

The parents can avoid their children from playing and engaging in digital gaming at their preschool and encourage more physical activities. The parents before letting their children play the digital games should check the reviews, ratings, age limit of the game and also the warning content that is provided with the digital gaming (Namli and Demir, 2020). The parents should engage themselves in playing the games along with their children and making themselves a part of their world. This helps in creating more engagement with the children and understanding their perspectives and life. The online gaming time for teenagers should be fixed by the parents, which helps in restricting the overindulgence in the games.

The parents should keep a track of their child's interactions on the online gaming platform to ensure that no personal details are revealed or shared with anyone. The parents should set a standard for their children that help the children to learn from the parents and encourage outdoor sports and physical activities.

Parents affect the social attributes of their children and help in developing a wide range of attitudes and social skills. Therefore, the parents should make an effort to help the children socialize by controlling their interaction with digital gaming. As per the view of Lee et al. (2018), the parents can bring positive as well as negative outcomes from their children's online gaming. The probability and the correlation that online gaming has tend to affect their behaviour. Thus, the parents must take the proper safety measures that help reduce the negative side effects digital gaming has on children.

The parents growing concerned regarding the lack of regulations by the government to protect the teenagers have made the UK government take proper regulation in restricting the violent content related to digital gaming. The parents themselves spend time playing online games with their children, which helps in creating the safety measures for the parent sin examining the demographic factors that regulate the Teenager's digital gaming.

The parents allow their children to play the digital games by limiting their time playing which helps in strengthening the cognitive function of the children. It improves the children's capacity to respond to the different situations that benefit their child in developing the skills related to

problem-solving, decision making as well as response timing of the teenagers towards the particular activity (Xu et al. 2020). The parents allow the children to engage with digital gaming with proper safety measures that help in promoting relaxation and improving the mood of the children which helps in reducing the anxiety among the teenagers. According to Kem (2021), educational institutions are the second line of defense as far as moral education is concerned. The parents are involved with the teenagers to create a safer gaming environment for the children that help in raising the children with morals and values.

Conclusion

In the backdrop of the above, it would therefore be safe to conclude that aggression and violence are increasing among male teenagers, especially those who come across violent content in online gaming. Thus, teenagers try to implement the damaging practices in real life, and their behaviour is influenced by the violent content of digital gaming. The behavioural habits related to shouting and overacting have increased among teenagers. As discussed by Johnson (2021), the performance of teenagers in their education, as well as their day-to-day activities, is decreased because of the increased time spent on online gaming platforms. Online gaming has both pros and cons that affect teenagers in their real-life situations. Online gaming is essential in improving brain function as the cognitive function of teenagers is improved. The strengthened brain circuit of the teenagers helps in enhancing their skills of the teenagers such as teamwork, problem-solving skills with a logical understanding of the situation and decision making. The multitasking ability of teenagers is developed along with the improved coordination of the eye and the hand. Therefore, it can be concluded by the overall discussion that teenagers are indulged in digital gaming; however, overuse of anything can harm their psychology. Therefore, this should be restricted, and time-bound for them.

Teenagers can put greater attention to the details that help display their better skills of the teenagers. However, online gaming leads to aggressive behaviour among teenagers due to poor sleep hygiene. As stated by Lee et al. (2018), around 2-3% of teenagers are subjected to a mental disorder that causes depression and anxiety due to excessive online gaming. Online gaming has se4verve physical implications on the physical health of the teenagers, such as obesity, physical impairment of the joints, and weaker eyesight. As a consequence of online gaming start sleeping less; as a result, they become depressed and anxious (İbrahim, 2019). Inadequate sleep affects the other parts of the Teenager's life; as a result, their performance is decreased in everyday work. The poor concentration and the deceased focus make the teenagers less productive affecting their mental health.

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