VIOLENCE IN COMPUTER GAMES

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ABSTRACT: Violence is one of the most discussed topics of video games. All, teachers, parents and psychologists are discussing that whether violent computer games affect children negatively or not? While some claim that violent video games have negative effects on people, others claim that violent video games have positive effects on people. How parents can decide which is true? Is the violence in computer games only factor that makes children violent? What parents should do to prevent their child being violent?
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1. INTRODUCTION

Video games are attracting millions of people all over the world and the number of these gamers is increasing each day rapidly by the help of new technologies and more realistic games. Revolution of video games started nearly forty years ago and it is going on.

A. S. Douglas prepared the first video game called Noughts and Crosses in 1952 as a part of PhD thesis at Cambridge University (Brookhaven National Labtatory,2011). Noughts and Crosses which was prepared on EDSAC (Electronic Delay Storage Automatic Calculator) was the first computer game, too.

Online games are the most popular games of our decade. People spend 3 billion hours per week to play online game (Mcgonical, 2010). The question is "Why people spent this much time in front of PC to play games instead of doing any other activity?". There are several reasons why they play this much. But, all reasons are related with Flow and Motivation Theories.

According to Flow theory, people experience the flow when there are "a challenging activity requiring skills", "a merging of actions and awareness", "clear goals", "direct feedback", "concentration the task at hand", "a sense of control", "a loss of self consciousness" and "a altered sense of time" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). By the help of developing new technologies, people feel the flow at a level that they have never felt before. Steering wheels, guns and new other technologies increase the level of interaction, presence and immersion (Tamborini & Skalski, 2006). Presence can be defined as "the subjective experience of being in one place or environment, even when one is physically situated in another." "Immersion is a psychological state characterized by perceiving oneself to be enveloped by, included in, and interacting with an environment that provides a continuous stream of stimuli and experiences." (Witmer & Singer, 1998). According to Motivation Theory, there are two different types of motivation: individual and interpersonal. Individual motivation has four components. These are "challenge, curiosity, control and fantasy". Interpersonal motivation has three components. These are "cooperation, competition and recognition" (Malone & Lepper, 1987).

The MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games) are the most played online games; however, not only a game but also a fully developed multiplayer universe (Cole & Griffiths, 2007). This universe has its own rules and civilizations. It encourages the interaction between the members. It is not a must but being a member of a clan is preferred. There is a competition and cooperation at the same time. Clans move together, fight together, win or lose together. They should cooperate to rise their clan and compete to individual achievement.

Developing new technologies transform our computers from stand alone desktop machines to a powerful, multitask, networked device (Axelsson & Regan, 2002). People use their computers as a "star gate". They allow us to teleport from real world to completely different virtual worlds. These worlds are called as Networked Virtual Environments (Net-VE). The Net-VEs allow people to interact with each other in a real time in a sense of real world (Manninen, 2000).

People love these virtual worlds and spend more and more time in their virtual world. They feel themselves more powerful and successful in these worlds. There is nobody complains about their failures. People can develop better relationships with other people in their virtual worlds (Mcgonical, 2010).

The MMORPG requires doing multiple tasks that requires different levels of skills with different characters with different roles (Cole & Griffiths, 2007). Each task includes variety of problems. Each problem is suitable for the level of the member. Universe does not give a problem to a member that s/he cannot solve (Mcgonical, 2010). This is coherent with the flow. There is a challenging problem but it is doable.

The MMOPRGs are the way of getting friend and becoming social. Cole and Griffiths (2007) mentioned that nearly the three quarters of MMORPG players have a good friendship in game and 55,4% of the females and 36,7% of the males have met up with a game friend in real life. Another interesting issue is that nearly one third of players had been attracted to another player.

People become the member of the communities or clans in their virtual worlds. Different from the real life they have a chance to choose their community. Clans, fellowships or allegiances are the communities that allow people to get together around and issue or aim. Axelsson and Regan (2002) claim that the members of such communities have more friends and close friends than the people who are not a member of any community and there is a positive relationship between the belonging group number and sociality.

2. VIOLENCE IN COMPUTER GAMES

Violence is one of the most discussed topics of video games. Proportion of the violence in games has been rising during the evolution of video games. While there was no violence in first video games, the main theme of today's video games is violence. At first, video ability was an obstacle to create realistic display and only simple graphics could be shown on the screen. Over the time, related to developing technologies video games become more and more realistic (Carnegey and Anderson, 2004). While fighting cartoonlike, animated characters was the violence in first video games, kicking, killing or fighting real people, ripping out their heart is violence of today's games (Weber, Ritterfelf and Kostygina, 2006).

There is a big discussion about video games. Are violent ones harmful? Do they make people aggressive? There are a lot of researches and opinion related this discussion. Some of them argue that violent video games are harmful (Carnegey and Anderson, 2004) while others suppose opposite (Griffiths, 1999).

Carnagey and Anderson (2004) mentioned that there is a positive relationship between playing violent games and aggressive behaviors. Interaction between the video game and player causes the aggression. There is identification with the violent character. Player should focus the violence on the screen o pass the next mission. Moreover, Carnagey and Anderson (2004) mentioned that violent games decrease the prosocial behavior level of people.

Grodal (2000) claims that violent films and video games accustom people to violence and sex. People learn these behaviors from films and games and adapt them to their life. Lastly, violent films and games raise the arousal level and people get ready to violence.

On the other hand, Catharsis Theory claims that video games including violence have a positive relaxing effect. While people playing violent games and killing other people feel relaxed and discharge of negative feelings. People can use their more energy by this way and they would not harm other people (Griffiths, 1999).

Only games, which include violence, may not cause aggression and violent behavior. There should be other factors that cause violence. Not only video games, but also violent characteristic of parent, environment or other factors cause aggression. As Catharsis Theory mentioned video games help people to relax and have fun. When other factors affect the people, video game could be the last straw. Violence can be seen as an illness. While some illnesses are genetic, the person who carries tat gene should not be ill. Environment, nourishment and many other factors causes illness. As the same way, only playing violent games does not cause aggression.

Parental Supervision as Carnagey and Anderson (2004) mentioned is the key point of eliminating the effects. Parents are the closest people with the children at home. They make decisions, buy goods and manage home. They should take care of their children. Giving them money to buy what they want or banning something to do is not being parent. They should examine the game they bought; moreover, they should go to buy the game, together. Rating scale of the games should be evaluated. Games should be chosen to the age of the child. The violent effect can be closed if it is possible.

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