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AN ANALYSIS OF ADDICTION FOR VIOLENT ONLINE GAME IN ADOLESCENT: VIRTUAL ETHNOGRAPHY

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Abstract

"Addiction and "Gaming Problem" began to appear in the literature to describe those who spent excessive amounts of time outline that interfered with other life activities. In previous decade, researchers have been trying to prove that online video games are bad. Much of the attention has focused on the violent content of some of the games, and many dozens of studies have been done in attempts to prove that playing online violent games causes real-world violence. For all of these reasons, people have lots of questions surrounding what science says about the effects of video games. Do games cause violence or aggression? Are they addictive? Are they healthy ways to relax and de-stress? How to use virtual ethnography for psychological and social problems in adolescent? The paper is intended primarily for parents and those who work with young people who may be obsessed with online video games.

Keywords

Problem Video Gaming, Adolescents, Internet Gaming Disorder, Virtual Ethnography, Addiction, Violent Online Game, Adolescent.

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Introduction

In one extreme case, a seventeen-year-old murdered his mother after she denied access to online video games (Stockdale and Coyne, 2018). In another tragic case, a young man stabbed his mother to death when she told him he could no longer play computer online games (Sussman et al., 2018). There have also been numerous examples of young people dying from pulmonary vein embolisms during marathon gaming sessions (ESA, 2018). More common problems include poor effort in school, failing to do homework, irregular sleep habits (especially for teens that may stay up very late playing online games), poor eating habits, loss of non-gamer friends, social isolation and anger or physical aggression when asked to stop playing (Seok et al., 2018). The World Health Organization (WHO) recently decided to add "Gaming disorder" to its official list of mental health conditions, stating that gaming behavior could qualify as problematic if it interferes significantly in other areas of people's lives (Nam, 2017). Some people have also suggested there are links between playing online video games and violent behavior, especially in the wake of tragic events like the school shooting in Parkland, Florida (ESA, 2018). President Obama had similar questions after the Sandy Hook school shooting in Newton, Connecticut. "Congress will fund research into the effects that violent online games have on young minds," he said at the time (while also calling for policies that would ban the purchase of military-style weapons and improve background checks for firearm purchases in order to curb gun violence) (ESA, 2018). For all of these reasons, people have lots of questions surrounding what science says about the effects of online video games. Do games cause violence or aggression? Are they addictive? Are they healthy ways to relax and de-stress? Literature Review For many years now, researchers have been trying to prove that online video games are bad. Much of the attention has focused on the violent content of some of the games, and many dozens of studies have been done in attempts to prove that playing violent

online games causes real-world violence (Toker and Baturay, 2016). This past year, the US Supreme Court was faced with the task of evaluating that research, in the case of Brown versus Entertainment Merchants Association (EMA). After much testimony and study, the court concluded, "Studies purporting to show a connection between exposure to violent online video games and harmful effects on children do not prove that such exposure causes minors to act aggressively." In 2010, the Australian government faced with petitions to ban or restrict online video games with violent content reached a similar conclusion after evaluating all of the evidence. And social scientists who have scrutinized the studies and conducted meta-analyses of them have also come to that conclusion (Liu and Chang, 2016). Today, worldwide, hundreds of millions of people play online video games (Han et al., 2012). The vast majority of those players are perfectly normal people, meaning that nothing newsworthy ever happens to them, but some small percentage of them are killers, some are extraordinarily depressed, some are suicidal; and every day some online video gamer somewhere does something terrible or experiences something terrible (Li and Wang, 2013). All this is also true of the hundreds of millions of people who don't play online video games. This is why case stories, by themselves, are worthless. If we want to know about the consequences of playing online video games, or of anything else, we need well-designed research studies and statistics. The emphasis here is on the well-designed (Hussain et al., 2015). Just how widespread is online video game use? Apparently, 155 million Americans play online video games at least three times a week (Greenfield, 2018). Particular concern is the violent nature of many online video games, and it is clear that playing such games stimulates the players to be more aggressive (Balakrishnan and Griffiths, 2018). Balakrishnan and Griffiths (2018) summarized the evidence that violent online games promote aggressive behavior in the player. Increases occur in hitting, kicking, punching, biting, fights at school, and juvenile delinquency. Seok et al. (2018) points out that longitudinal studies rule out the possibility that children who are already violent are the ones who become addicted to violent online games. Playing violent online games actually makes children more violent. A recent analysis finds that research on online video games is prone to false positives and false negatives, which leads to faulty conclusions (Choi et al., 2018). That's a lot of conflicting perspectives, so what's the take-home message here? First, there is not solid, irrefutable evidence that violent online games lead to aggressive behavior (Greenfield, 2018). That does not mean that every game is for every child. Certainly, many violent online games are scary and inappropriate for some kids. Understanding each child's needs and creating a plan that sets out rules for media use and monitors kids‟ activities on screens is a sensible way to approach online video games (Hussain et al., 2015).

Research Method:

Qualitative methods are particularly useful for revealing the rich symbolic world that underlies needs, desires, meanings and choice (Wang, 2018; Calder, 1977). The novel, computer-mediated, textual, nonphysical, social-cue-impoverished context of online community may have hampered its rigorous investigation by researchers (Wang, 2016; Fetterman, 1989). Over the past several years, many anthropologists, sociologists and qualitative marketing researchers have written about the need to specially adapt existing ethnographic research techniques to the many cultures and communities that are emerging through online communications (Wang, Lee and Hsu,

2017; Grossnickle et al., 2000; Hagel et al., 1997; Hakken, 1999; Hammersley et al., 1995; Hirschman, 1986; Jorgensen, 1989; King, 1996). "Virtual ethnography," or ethnography on the Internet, is a new qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to the study of cultures and communities emerging through computer-mediated communications (Wang, Lee and Hsu, 2017; Kozinets, 1998). The strength of "virtual ethnography" is its particularistic ties to specific online consumer groups and the revelatory depth of their online communications (Miller et al., 2000). "Virtual ethnography" is based primarily upon the observation of textual discourse, an important difference from the balancing of discourse and observed behavior that occurs during in-person ethnography (Rheingold, 1993). Informants, therefore, may be presumed to be presenting a more carefully cultivated and controlled self-image (Kopytoff, 1986). Over an 18-month period, the virtual ethnography study involved both participant and non-participant observation (Lincoln et al., 1985). The researcher "worked" within the organization four days per week, and was provided office space, systems access, and access to all managerial levels for the entirety of the study (Mead, 1938). Virtual ethnography studies of this kind are acknowledged as being advantageous due to their capacity to understand complex scenarios, whereby a rich understanding of a particular phenomenon is needed (Wang, 2018; McCracken, 1988). In addition to the steering group meetings, like the steering group meetings described above, were all digitally recorded and the proceedings fully transcribed (Reid, 1996). These meetings lasted on average 3 to 5 h. The present study combined this virtual ethnography observation of management with the addition of a number of semi-structured interviews (Sherry, 1991). The interviews were: 51 implementation interviews, 35 interviews undertaken while was operational and 27 interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes. Also, the virtual ethnography research design allowed additional data to be collected from adhoc and often spontaneous conversations within the organization with individuals at all levels and across all functions during the 18 month period, as noted (Wang, 2018; Jones, 1995). Some of this interaction was recorded in a research diary, which comprises of 250+ pages of notes, including 100+ pages of field notes (Calder, 1977).

Data Analysis:

(1) Open coding. All instances of resistance were flagged as categories of recurring themes, in order to be directed by the phenomenon in question;

(2) Axial coding. Each of the categories was sub-coded to create subcategories;

(3) Selective coding. Each category of data derived from the first and second stages of coding were combined for each category in order to identify key findings (Wang, 2018; Spiggle, 1994).

All occurrences of resistance and type of justification defending them were examined. This was undertaken to try and explain how occurrences of resistance were explained and justified by those in the organization while undertaking a change management initiative to implement (Richards and Richards, 1994; Wang, 2018).

Research Finding:

People play games because they are challenging, fun, and conducive to social interaction with other gamers; but they are bombarded by messages from the larger culture suggesting that

gaming is a sign of laziness, is "addictive," and leads to all sorts of ill effects, and so they become concerned about their gaming (Toker and Baturay, 2016). People who spend similar amounts of time at chess, or reading English literature, or skiing, don't get these messages. The messages themselves, according to Langlois, can produce distress in gamers (Sussman et al., 2018). As Nam (2017) puts it, the stereotype presents the gamer as apathetic and avoidant of any work or investment. One thing we know about stereotypes is that they can be internalized and lead to self-fulfilling negativism and I've come to hear gamers refer to themselves as lazy slackers. The following proposition was made in this study based on the literature review and field data: P1: Negative stereotypes can create feelings of stigma in video gamers. Still, of course, some people let their dedication to online video gaming--or to chess, or to skiing, or to anything else--interfere with other aspects of their life, and that can be a problem (Stockdale and Coyne, 2018). Lots of us need to learn time management, especially as we reach adulthood, in order to do what we want to do and still fulfill our obligations to others (Seok et al., 2018). My loved ones sometimes remind me that it's not fair for me to spend all of my time reading and writing or going off alone bicycling or skiing. But, let's not stigmatize any of this by calling it an addiction. Let's just call it a time management problem and figure out constructive ways to deal with it (Panagiotidi and Overton, 2018). In some cases, people engage in an activity not just because of their enjoyment of it, but also because it is an escape from something painful in their lives or is the only route available to them to satisfy basic psychological needs (Nam, 2017). This can occur for adults as well as children. The activity that seems to become obsessive might be video gaming, or it might be something else (Liu and Chang, 2016). For instance, some adults devote far more time to their careers than they otherwise might, because that allows them to avoid an unpleasant family environment (Li and Wang, 2013). Some kids say they play online video games at least partly as a means of escape, and some say they do so because it is the only realm of activity in which they feel free (Hussain et al., 2015). In an age in which children are often not allowed to play freely outdoors, and in which they are more or less constantly directed by adults, the virtual world of online video games is for some the only realm where they are allowed to roam free and explore (Han et al., 2012). If they were allowed more autonomy in the real world, many of them would spend less time at online video games (Greenfield, 2018). As illustration of this idea, Choi et al. (2018) gives some case examples. One case is that of Martin, an 11-year-old boy whose mother became concerned about the huge amounts of time he was devoting to World of War craft and therefore forbade him from playing it or other online video games, which made things only worse for Martin. It turned out, according to Lee et al. (2015) that Martin was an only child who was being bullied at school and hated going there, and who was afraid of going outside at home because of repeated bullying. The online video game was his only source of free expression and his only satisfying contact with other people. When this was taken away from him, he was understandably distraught. Another example is that of Helen, a 32-year-old MD who worked in a temporary research position and spent most of her spare time playing the MMORPG Final Fantasy alone in her apartment (Balakrishnan and Griffiths, 2018). It turned out that Helen had recently experienced a bad breakup with a long-term partner, was unhappy with her job and was severely

depressed. Playing Final Fantasy was not cause of her depression, but was her way of coping with it during this difficult time in her life. The online game provided social connections and pleasure at a time when nothing else did. The following proposition was made in this study based on the literature review and field data:

P2: Great amounts of time playing video games can be evidence of something missing in a person's life. One review of research by the American Psychological Association (APA) found that people who played violent online games were very slightly more likely to engage in aggressive behavior (actions like playing a loud sound that people they were competing against could hear over an audio system). However, the APA said playing online games was not enough to cause aggression. Other studies have found no link between game violence and violent or aggressive thoughts (Sussman et al., 2018). Some researchers, like APA member Stockdale and Coyne (2018) have even disputed findings connecting games to aggression, saying many of the studies that drew such conclusions had methodological problems. Either way, aggressive behavior is not the same as violence. The following proposition was made in this study based on the literature review and field data:

P3: Some studies link playing violent games to slight increases in aggression — though aggression is not the same as violence. Balakrishnan and Griffiths (2018) found that about 20% of school shooters played violent online games, compared to close to 70% of their nonviolent peers. A 2004 report on school shooters by the US Secret Service and Department of Education (US-SSDE) found that only 12% of school shooters displayed an interest in violent online games. The following proposition was made in this study based on the literature review and field data:

P4: Many of the people involved in mass shooting incidents seem to be less interested in violent video games than their peers. One study out of Choi et al. (2018) found that youth violence rates dropped 29% between 2002 and 2014. Youth violence rates spiked from 1980 to 1994, according to the Urban Institute. But those rates started to plummet in the 1990s, dropping 34% between 1994 and 2000. It's easy to find online video games that depict blood, gore, and violence. Yet studies show that youth violence has consistently declined as these games have become available (Liu and Chang, 2016). This is just a correlation it does not mean that online games cause violence rates to drop (Li and Wang, 2013). But it also doesn't support the idea that violent online games are "creating monsters," as Trump put it in 2012. Various political figures have blamed school shootings on kids playing violent online games. Greenfield (2018) said guns were not a problem but that games desensitized players to the value of human life. Nam (2017) said after the Sandy Hook shooting that "Guns don't kill people. Video games, the media, and Osama's budget kill people." But a comparison of the 10 largest online video game markets in the world shows that there are far more gun murders in the US than in other countries that spend a lot of money on online video games (Nam, 2017). That's even true in countries that spend more on online games per capita than the US does, including Germany, Australia, the UK, Canada, France, Japan, and South Korea (Panagiotidi and Overton, 2018). If online video games were responsible for violence, there should be more violence in those countries. The following proposition was made in this study based on the literature review and field data:

P5: Video games can't explain the US's outlier status in terms of gun violence. Some

researchers have found that kids who played online video games were more creative than kids who didn't play and it didn't matter which type of online video game was used (Seok et al., 2018). The same thing was not true for other technology use, like use of cell phones or the internet. But again, researchers aren't sure whether games made kids more creative or creative kids were drawn to games. The following proposition was made in this study based on the literature review and field data:

P6: There are also links between video-game playing and creativity. People play online video games to relax, and research finds games can indeed help with that. Studies have shown that puzzle online video games can decrease stress and improve mood (Hussain et al., 2015). According to research from the APA, online games can elicit a range of emotions, positive and negative including satisfaction, relaxation, frustration, and anger (Han et al., 2012). Experiencing these emotions in a gaming context may help people regulate emotions, learn to cope with situations, and challenge themselves, the APA said. Other studies have shown that kids who play moderate amounts of online games (less than an hour per day) have fewer emotional issues and are more likely to help others than kids who don't play online games. The following proposition was made in this study based on the literature review and field data:

P7: Playing games can help people relax, feel better, and trigger positive emotional responses. Virtual-reality environments provide safe but real-feeling scenarios in which people can face fears and difficult situations with the support of a therapist (Greenfield, 2018). New technology is making these sorts of interventions much more accessible than they used to be. VR has been used to provide exposure therapy for people with PTSD or phobias, as well as to provide scenarios that help heroin addicts deal with triggering moments (Choi et al., 2018). Researchers have also used VR as an alternative to painkillers since entering a "new reality" allows someone's brain to forget the pain they're dealing with during surgery. The following proposition was made in this study based on the literature review and field data:

P8: Used online video game technologies like virtual reality to help people recover from PTSD, get over phobias. One study of 10- to 15-year-old children found that kids who played less than an hour of online video games per day were more satisfied than kids who didn't play games or kids who played one to three hours per day (Balakrishnan and Griffiths, 2018). The groups of kids that didn't play or played between one and three hours daily seemed to have the same level life satisfaction (Choi et al., 2018). Kids who played more than three hours a day were less satisfied than any of the other groups (Greenfield, 2018). From what we know, there are ways that online video games can help people relax, challenge themselves, and even push their cognitive abilities. At the same time, it's quite possible that excessive time spent playing games as with any hobby may be unhealthy or a sign that someone is struggling (Hussain et al., 2015). But in general, online video games seem to be just another form of entertainment. The following proposition was made in this study based on the literature review and field data:

P9: The psychological effects of online video games might vary depending on how much you play.

Conclusion:

After years of warnings from academics that first person “shooter“ games were responsible

for an increase in antisocial behavior and crime, a major new study has found that levels of aggression in those who play these games for hours at a time were the same as those who never play. Using psychological questionnaires and brain scans, researchers found no difference in capacity for empathy among both groups. For years, there have been fears that games such as Grand Theft Auto, where players are part of a criminal gang committing violent crimes, has caused an increase in crime. One politician in Salford back in 2015 said that a rise in gun violence in the area was the result of a diet of war games and Grand Theft Auto. Researchers have now said that the results of earlier studies have probably been skewed because they tended to assess the psychological state of participants directly afterthey had been playing these games. For players who admit they have a problem, the most common response is a guilt-and-purge cycle common to many addictions. Some players who realize they are addicted will kill their characters and delete the game software with no regrets; however, other game addicts are not so successful. Often gamers refuse treatment until they become deeply depressed or are expelled from school, terminated from a job, threatened with divorce, or thinking about suicide. Treatment can help patients recognize and treat underlying issues that co-occur with IGD. Inpatient care may be required, to provide intensive therapy when the effects of the game are severe. Parents may initiate residential care for a child who is addicted to online gaming, because the child may be unable to recognize the depth of the problem. Although it can be difficult to find a facility that understands the special needs of treating Internet gaming addiction in the US, gradually more inpatient facilities are learning about this new form of addictive behavior. Therapy should help gamers abstain from gaming and moderate their legitimate use of the Internet and technology. This is the most difficult step. The therapist needs to monitor the patient's use of technology and help him readjust the amount of time he spends playing games. Certain behaviors become treatment goals, such as being able to complete daily activities; maintain a normal routine; and spend time involved in sports, clubs, or organizations at school or in the community. Children need to re-engage with activities they enjoyed before they began spending most of their time playing the game or find new activities they can learn to enjoy as part of abstaining from gaming.

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