The Ethics of Video Games and Their Effect on Different Age Groups

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Abstract: Electronic games have become "fashionable" to be followed mainly by the young and middle ages. This whole industry is developing at a fast pace while the ethical aspect has not found much interest to be discussed. Unfortunately, playing electronic games has affected our behavior and the way we make decisions in everyday life. However, discussion on the ethical aspects of these games has been limited. This study aims to examine the effects of video games on the behavior and way of making decisions in the daily lives of users. To carry out this study, a methodology that includes analysis of existing literature was used. Through an in-depth analysis, the positive and negative impacts of these games on children and adolescents have been identified. The results show that, while video games can improve cognitive skills and coordination, they can also promote aggressive behavior and negatively affect the moral development of young people. In conclusion, the paper offers recommendations on how to guide the use of video games ethically and responsibly, encouraging awareness and education of users and parents.

Keywords: Ethics, Behavior, Affect, Video Games.

INTRODUCTION

Video games have become an important part of modern culture, influencing not only the way we are entertained but also the way we socialize and learn. As technology advances, games have become increasingly sophisticated and complex, offering experiences that rival everyday reality. However, as their popularity has grown, there has also been an increase in concerns about the ethical impact of these games on player behavior and development, especially in younger age groups.

Ethics, which is often used as a synonym for the word moral, has to do with the principles, norms, and behaviors that an individual builds during life experiences, especially during early childhood until adolescence. In the time we are living, the digital world has become an irreverent part of almost every individual, using different applications for work or entertainment. Consequently, this has caused the morals and ethics of individuals to change due to the new digital circumstances. In the meantime, video games are a major driver of these changes (Keogh, 2024; Bajovic, 2012).

The assumption many people make is that digital games are well-suited to enhance instruction and differentiate learning, while also providing more effective and less intrusive

measurement than traditional assessments. An attractive element of the game experience as a learning tool is that it provides opportunities for continuous practice because negative consequences are not usually associated with failure. Rather, failure serves as an integral part of the learning experience. This encourages players to improve through repeated practice or by progressing within a game or replaying parts of a game. Failure with limited consequences, agency, and choice are seen as critical elements of a true game experience. That is, in the context of education where a game can become a required activity associated with real consequences, there may be a reduction of these key elements that may make students less inclined to practice and understand some of the benefits of the game. However, learning doesn't just end with play. Summarizing information is essential for the use of games in education, as it provides the link between learning in the game and the application of these skills in other contexts. Teachers can facilitate skill transfer by leading pre- and post-game discussions that connect the game to other things students are learning in the classroom (Orhani, 2023).

There has been a lot of media attention on children and teenagers playing video games that are rated above their age and the consequences this can have (McKernan., 2013). Thus, the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB, 2015) was

established in the USA to oversee the content in video games and to protect children and adolescents from inappropriate content (Kent, 2001). Other rating systems were also introduced including the Pan-European Games Information (PEGI) (PEGI, 2015) and the Video Standards Council (VSC) (VSC, 2015) which have been used in Europe. The problem with using a movie rating system like VSC with video games is that movies and games require a different level of involvement, agency, and interactivity (Thomas, 2006). Agency is defined as the level of control or choice players have in video games (McKernan., 2013). It's the difference between watching someone kill a character and a player personally pressing a button to kill a character. PEGI uses an age rating associated with images that represent content, such as a picture of a fist for violence. Additionally, consoles also have the option for a parental control setting (PEGI, 2015). These rating systems have been criticized for producing conflicting and confusing ratings about video game content (BBCNews, 2008; CNN, 2001; Scutti, 2016). PEGI has subsequently teamed up with the VSC to create a rating system and this system has been integrated into UK law, known as the Games Rating Authority (VSC, 2015).

The purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of video games on the behavior and ethical development of children and adolescents. With the development of technology and increased access to electronic games, it has become essential to understand how these games affect the behavior, cognitive skills, and ethical development of young people. Also, this paper aims to present the positive and negative sides of video games to young children and adolescents and to make recommendations on how we can guide the use of video games in the best ethical aspect.

ETHICS AND VIDEO GAMES

Understanding ethics, video games

In everyday use, the term "ethics" takes on different meanings. One of the most frequent meanings attributed to this term is related to "the principles that guide the behavior of an individual or a certain group of individuals" (Çela, 2016).

A video game is a computer game designed primarily for entertainment purposes. To make this possible, electronic machines are used - consoles designed to play games and a video screen such as a computer monitor or television is the main game display device. The game is controlled by input devices such as a keyboard, mouse, joystick, or any other device designed for games such as steering wheels for driving games, light guns for shooting games, and drums for music games.

Ethics and video games

Electronic games attract ethical attention because in these games one can, and is sometimes encouraged to, perform actions that are morally prohibited in the real world. Many researchers have examined the alleged real-world consequences of encouraging such actions while others focus on the positive aspects of electronic games in education and training. Both approaches agree on one thing, namely, that these games can change our ideas about the world and how we act in it (Gotterbarn, 2010).

Electronic game developers mainly deal with the creation and design of games and other technical matters. Whereas, social scientists or educators examine how the elements of electronic games affect the ethics of users of electronic games. This very good work of both parties but separated from each other has made the developers or experts of electronic games not contribute to the solution of this problem

THE MAIN CATEGORIES OF VIDEO GAMES AND THEIR INFLUENCE

Depending on the purpose - the topic for which the game is built through the computer, different types of computer games are also divided.

Computer games can be grouped into two categories. First are games that help develop talents, understanding life experiments, and ethical values using an entertaining method; Second are games that contribute nothing to the child's imagination and thinking skills and encourage violent and immoral behavior. For the game to positively affect the intellectual, physical, and spiritual development of the child depends on the content and duration of the game. This period of playtime should be neither too short nor too long. To achieve a proper balance in this matter, we must first equip the child with an education to use time wisely. Children wasting their time on useless activities may also be desensitized to the effective use of time when they grow up. In summary, children must acquire an awareness of time estimation. Time spent in front of computers causes children and young people to become passive. This increases the stress experienced by children. Especially in active boys, this passivity causes an accumulation of energy that negatively affects the child's behavior. The use of excess energy in various types of sports is very useful for physical and mental development and raising social consciousness. Moreover, spending time in front of computers deprives children and young people of cultural activities such as playing games in groups, studying together, and engaging in sports activities (Aydinli, 2004).

Electronic games by gender

Many studies have been done that have aimed to present the gender relations in the use of electronic games and highlight the construction of the game adapted to gender from the design of the characters to the environment and the way of playing. But

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in general, it is said that there is a division between female and male players, emphasizing some arguments such as female players are fewer in number than men, they connect their experience with games by orienting it towards the goal, there are few women who their main hobby is electronic gaming. Some other positions say that the smaller number of females participating in electronic games is that they do not have enough skills in these types of games and relate this to the reason that there is no favorable tool for their requirements (Rajkowska, 2014).

Based on data from the Entertainment Software Association of Canada on the participation in computer games of youth aged 13-17 the results show that 53% are boys and 47% are girls who play video games (CBC, 2019).

A phenomenon that affects both sexes equally and comes as a result of the Internet is nervousness and excessive stress due to uncontrolled and violent computer games. There is no doubt that there are useful games on the Internet that develop the child's intelligence if they are used regularly and on a certain schedule. However, if the child is left without control in computer games, without a doubt he will lose his intelligence and gain aggressiveness. Game manufacturers, and especially Internet cafe owners, consider any method permissible just to attract children to the screen. Various scenes of violence do not suit the age of the children or their awareness. Children who see various scenes of violence are generally wild and quick-tempered, considering violence as something ordinary. The reactions of these children are seen very often, so they tend to hit and kick others even after a slight disagreement (Aydinli, 2004).

Video games for educational purposes
In the field of education, the use of video games has brought a kind of revolution in the teaching and learning processes. Teachers who have recommended the use of video games with an educational character are more effective and creative in orienting learning to students (KEC, 2015).

The impact on education can be further extended to improve critical thinking, and creativity and encourage an exploratory approach to problem solving.

Some of the examples of the use of video games in the educational process are:

- https://www.typingclub.com/ - electronic game that serves online free of charge to learn to type on the keyboard in a professional way
- https://www.gamestolearnenglish.com/ - various games to learn English

Not only video games to learn educational content from school education through electronic games. There is a great variety of games on the Internet that support good education and positively influence the ethics of users. They are designed to foster and support user learning and development. By searching the Internet for such games we come across those that are specified based on the age groups and abilities that those groups may have. A good example for children ages preschool through sixth grade is the website www.abcya.com which provides a safe, educational, and knowledge- and skill-enhancing virtual environment. These types of games affect the development of good ethics by making them aware of the maintenance of the environment, the good care of animals, the use of recycling materials, etc.

The impact of video games on other fields
In health, it can be in the rehabilitation of patients after a surgical intervention to increase the coordination of hands and eyes. Video games have been taken as a development model in other professions, helping to develop various professional skills through virtual activity in electronic games organized as simulators of real environments. Another example of the positive impact of electronic games is their use by the Intelligence Agency - the US Defense uses electronic games to train its spies and soldiers. The purpose of this use is to teach them how to think under pressure, how to reason, and how to use violence as a last resort.

MINECRAFT AND FORTNITE
To compare the positive and negative effects of video games, two of the most popular video games of recent years, Minecraft and Fortnite, will be compared. Both are electronic video games that can be played online alone or in groups.

Minecraft was created by Mojang Studios based in Sweden. Minecraft is one of the most successful games in the world that was critically acclaimed by almost every gaming magazine and website. It is described as a strategic game of survival of a virtual character in an environment almost unknown to him. The character led by the player must take action to ensure his survival. The game takes place with a lone character, he can cut down trees to build a residential facility, and he can kill animals to get the meat to prepare food meals for himself. When night falls he must be careful of zombies that can come out and attack the character. So in general a game that promotes ways to survive and find yourself in an unknown environment. Depending on the age of the players and the way the game is played and the time it is played, this game in addition to some positive effects such as those mentioned above can have negative effects such as the loss of sensitivity to the

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environment and nature, creating imagination surrounded by zombies, anxiety, and fear that can affect real life.

Fortnite, on the other hand, is an online survival shooter game developed by North Carolina-based Epic Games and released in 2017. It is structured more like a battle to the death. The game starts with the players being dropped on the island of their choice and they have to fight their way to the final mission which will be the last man standing. In the end, there will be only one survivor. In the "fight for survival," the character enters alone or as part of a team that fights against others. The game is free with a character character that changes each time the game is restarted. He can be a blonde or brunette girl or boy. So, the pre-selected character ready from the game does not represent gender or racial discrimination, but it may be limited

in what it can do in the war. If the player likes another character from the game, he can buy it online and continue the game with his favorite character.

In the ethical aspect of this game, violence, hatred, and destruction is seen as the main goal of the game. Although I can develop the strategic skills of locating in a foreign country, of defense and survival, the opposite ethical effect is much greater.

According to a Google search made by the www.rebootonline.com team in 2020, it can be seen that Fortnite is the first video game with a higher percentage of searches compared to Minecraft. This shows the popularity of this game even though it is not considered an educational game or that promotes good ethics in players (Khillar, 2024).
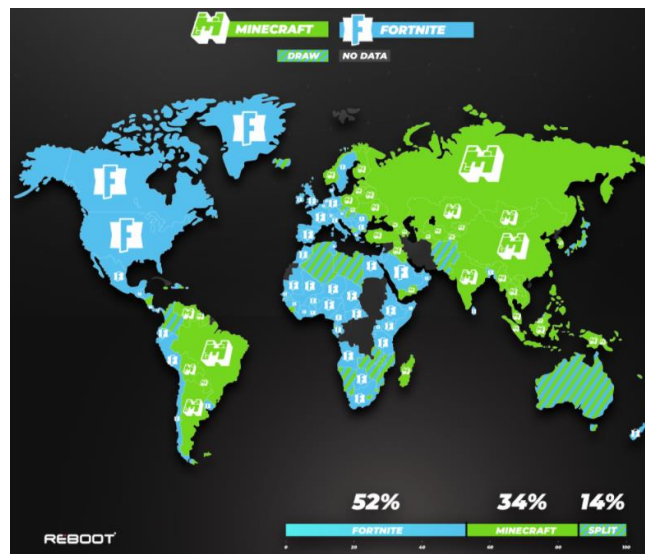

Figure 1. Fortnite vs Minecraft

CHILDREN'S AGE AND TIME SPENT PLAYING VIDEO GAMES

According to the report published in January 2019 by the Ofcon organization which provides support for the assurance of the quality of communication from various telecommunications companies in the United Kingdom, Internet games are increasingly popular among peers from 5 to 15 years old. As with Internet use, the estimated weekly hours spent gaming increased with age, ranging from 6 hours 12 minutes for 3-4 who play games to 13 hours 48 minutes for 12-15 year olds. For most age groups this has remained relatively the same since last year, but children aged 12-15 who play games say they spend an extra hour and a half a week compared to last year.

Of all the activities we cover, online gaming is the only one where we see the biggest gender disparities: boys in every age group spend more hours than girls in a typical week playing games. On average, girls aged 12-15 spend about 9 hours a week playing video games (9 hours 18 minutes), while boys of this age spend over 16 hours (16 hours 42 minutes). Among those who play games, three-quarters of 5-15-year-olds play more games online compared to last year (2017) - an increase of two-thirds. The incidence of online gaming increases with age, ranging from 37% for 3-4 year olds to 87% for 12-15 year olds. Online gaming can have a strong social element; nearly two in five online gamers aged 8-11 (38%) and three in five aged 12-15 (58%) say they use in-game chat options to talk to others. In terms of who they talk to, they indicate they are twice as likely to chat through the game with people they already know outside the game (34% 8-11s, 53% 12-15s) than to chat

with people they know only through play (10% 8-11, 25% 12-15s). Boys aged 12-15 who play online games are also shown to be twice as likely to chat with people they only know through the game compared to girls (30% vs 16%) (Ofcon, 2019).

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF VIDEO GAMES

Video games are a fun way to pass the time while encouraging teamwork and developing skills. Studies show that they help create new experiences for future careers and many other benefits. However, some risks need to be addressed to help children stay safe and have a positive play experience (Sherkhanov, 2024).

Some of the factors that go into evaluating a game as good or violent, beneficial or destructive to the age and development of the player are listed below:

Time spent playing video games

As with any hobby—soccer, chess, reading—those who enjoy playing video games in their free time will do so with the utmost enthusiasm. This can lead to a desire for children to play longer and more often. Of course, video games are designed to minimize difficulty, repeat gameplay, and maximize enjoyment. For this reason, parents need to apply time limits on their children's screen time (available on personal computers and smartphones) as this will help them develop healthily (Internetmatters, 2023).

Possible physical impact

Video games are primarily a sedentary hobby, although various games encourage physical activity such as Just Dance. If the games they play are of a nature that promotes movement this will be a very good thing and can be promoted as it has a positive impact on the health of the players of any age group. On the other hand, staying for hours in front of the screen will cause serious health problems. According to internetmetter.org, some studies suggest situations in which someone spends hours sitting in one place can increase the risk of Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT). But it can happen with any stationary leisure activity - including watching television, listening to music, or reading a book. Although this can be prevented, it is advised that all those who play games while sitting in front of the screen take breaks every hour. This will not only keep them moving but offer a chance for a change of activity.

Game type and player age restriction

During the design of video games, the age of the players is mainly determined and the contents of the game are made known, which may contain scenes of violence or other unethical elements.

These restrictions and caveats should not deter players of inappropriate ages from participating in these games, as the enthusiasm to experience such an adventure is great.

Such contents bring in most cases an imbalance of the player's feelings so that if there is no control and hours are spent in front of the screen with these types of games, there will be negative effects and changes in negative behavior in real life.

When it comes to children, the weight of responsibility falls on the parents or legal guardians first to provide a sincere education and awareness of the impact of such games and to constantly control and limit access to these games as much as possible. games.

Some of the recommended tips for parents are:

- Enable parental control on the device
- Keep devices in common family areas
- Allow speakers to be used instead of headphones from time to time
- Play the game yourself sometimes to get the clearest idea of what is said and what happens in the game

RAISING AWARENESS OF THE EFFECTS OF VIDEO GAMES

The best way to protect against the negative impact of video games and minimize the possible consequences is awareness by providing knowledge and compelling facts to children to raise awareness so that they learn self-control and overcome their great enthusiasm for video games. This cannot be achieved by home education alone, it must be supported by social activities and workshops organized by independent organizations and relevant state institutions.

The Kosovo Education Center KEC is a local non-governmental organization that works to improve the quality of education, human rights, and several other areas. In the years 2013-2015, he carried out a project entitled Procon - Protection of Children from Internet Dangers, where trainings were carried out for students of lower secondary schools, a conference was held on the findings and achievements from the implementation of this project, and two publications were published. manuals for students and parents related to this topic (Procon, 2015).

Media transmitting information such as television broadcasters, radios, newspapers, social media on the Internet, etc. They often make TV shows or publish various articles as a result of studies that take place around the world on the topic of the impact of video games. One such example is the article published on the website of the Voice of America entitled Video Games and Mental Health. This article presents the results of research conducted by a group of international scientists who observed nearly 3,000 elementary and eight-year-old school students for two years.

The role of the school is also crucial in the education and prevention of violence and unethical behavior that can develop students from the influence of video games. From my experience of working in the school, it can be said that the Student Clubs based at the school in their agenda of activities sometimes take up such topics by organizing debates and workshops with students at the school level. This approach

helps to raise awareness but the number of participants is small and cannot have a big impact.

With what was said above, if the Family is the essential cell of society, the various Organizations and the State institutional policies will see them with interest and will take concrete steps to raise awareness and prevent the consequences, sure that this in a chain way I will influence an intellectually developed society and safe environment for all (DaCosta, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Video games have a wide and complex influence on the lives of their users, especially young people. While they provide fun and educational experiences that can improve cognitive skills and coordination, they also carry certain risks that need to be addressed. From the study of the existing literature and the performed analyses, several main conclusions emerge:

- **Impact on behavior and moral development**: Games with violent content can promote aggressive behavior and negatively affect the moral development of young players (Sherkhanov, 2024). This is of particular concern to parents and educators seeking to protect children's well-being.
- **Gender representation**: The role of women in video games is often stereotyped, which can reinforce negative gender norms (Rajkowska, 2014). This points to the need for more fair and equal representation of the sexes in video games.
- **Cybercrime and online security**: As the popularity of online gaming has increased, incidents of cybercrime have also increased (DaCosta, 2020). This underscores the importance of educating and protecting users against these risks.

- **The importance of education and awareness**: Parents and children need to be informed about the safe and responsible use of video games (Ofcom, 2019). Proper education can help minimize risks and maximize benefits.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on these conclusions, several measures are recommended to ensure a more responsible and ethical use of video games:

1. **Game developers:** Should aim to create games that promote positive values and provide a fair and equal representation of the sexes. Violent content should be handled with care, and games should offer options that encourage cooperation and empathy.
2. **Parents and educators:** Should be actively involved in selecting games for their children and guide responsible technology use. Education about the risks and benefits of video games is essential to protecting children.
3. **Policymakers:** Should develop and implement policies that protect young users from inappropriate content and that promote ethics in the video game industry. This includes regulating violent content and establishing standards for gender representation.
4. **Researchers:** Should continue to study the effects of video games on the behavior and moral development of players, providing data and recommendations that can help improve practices in the industry.

By implementing these recommendations, a balance can be achieved between the benefits and risks of video games, ensuring that they are a source of entertainment and education that promotes the positive development of users of all ages.

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