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Literature Review on Video Games and Crime

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Literature Review on Video Games and Crime

Over the years, the video game business has gained more acceptance and mostly in one category; violence. Video game designers have obtained the proper tools necessary to develop video games for the characters in the game, the items or the facial expressions. Notably, the game designers intend to get the most responses from their patrons. The video game developers have majored on this aspect in order to capture consumers' attention and response by developing the visuals of a game in a way that the gamer is absorbed into a virtual world. Also the developers give the gamers a realistic gaming experience (Ward, 2011). Regrettably, this innovation has been utilized universally across video games, including violence. Violent video games that entail experience in the open world and first-person shooting have fascinated numerous gamers since it provides high levels of immersion. Through these violent video games, the gamers get to turn into 'someone else' and engage themselves in a simulated world. These virtual worlds created or portrayed by video games do not result in real consequences if the gamer kills someone by shooting them or steal someone else's belongings. The majority of gamers perceive this as just entertainment and a strategy to escape real-world troubles (Cunningham, Engelstätter & Ward, 2016). However, what happens if one brings the virtual characteristics acquired in the video game back to reality? This paper reviews and synthesizes the literature surrounding the correlation between video games and crime. The paper goes further to identify the gaps in the current knowledge regarding video games and crime. The report also provides suggestions for the research gaps.

In Fournis & Abou (2014) view, bringing the virtual word characteristics into the real world is called passive aggression. It is more of an ancillary expression of aggression to people or other subjects. The authors argue that the virtual rage and loathing characteristics can be

considered to have a very real effect, which has adverse impacts. The scholars contend that assuming that someone could be influenced by something that is not real, is not logical enough. They suggest that there is a need to be knowledgeable on other potential factors to help explain why a video game could have influenced someone in the first place.

Concurring to this argument, Cunningham, Engelstätter & Ward (2011) contend that one of the possible factors that could elaborate on why violent video games influence people is the behavior factor. In their study on video games and behaviour, the authors contend ³ that violent video games significantly contribute to passive violent conduct in people. The authors also refer to surveys conducted by other researchers. They argue that the more a child engages in violent video games, the more probable they are to exhibit passive-aggressive behaviours. Ferguson et al. (2008) supports this argument but subdivides the behaviors into two different types. The scholars divide these behaviours into biological behaviour and psychosocial behaviour. In biological behaviour, the authors argue that it is determined by the present and active chemicals in the body when the subject is playing the game. Psychosocial behaviour on the other hand occur when the subject is confronted by the emotional wellbeing and levels of maturity.

Similarly, Bassiouni & Hackley (2014) find that structure of the adolescence is also a factor in passive hostility because there is an upsurge in both adrenal and gonadal hormones when children get to teenage years. As such, adrenaline influences more aggression in attitude as well as physical activity. Regarding psychosocial behavior, the scholars contend that biological factors result in psychosocial behaviors in cases of adolescence but not continually in adulthood cases.

McCaffree & Proctor (2018) conducted a study ¹ on the relationship between video games and crime determined that video games contribute towards violent crimes. The authors argue that these games take violence to extremes, and players are likely to take these virtual world character traits into the real world. They postulate that those who make violent video games are no longer spectators but actors in the process of creating violence. The authors argue that violent video games' virtual characteristics influence crimes such as school shootings, violent crimes, and general stealing of people's possessions. However, the authors clarify that all crimes happening across the world are not influenced by video games, some are a result of other real-world forces. Copenhagen, Mitrofan & Ferguson (2017) and Ferguson (2007) second McCaffree & Proctor (2018) findings by arguing that in video games, bad news is good news. In this regard, shooting someone, stealing other people's possessions or fighting others in the video game earns points to the players. Also, through these points, they can acquire other weapons to enable them destroy their 'enemies' further. On the same, Porter & Starcevic (2007) find that these rewards attached to violent actions in the video game influence people to engage in criminal activities with that reward mentality.

Many studies have found ² a correlation between video games and crimes. The study establishes steady relations ² between the use of video games and an increase in violent behaviour, violent cognitions and violent affect. However, some studies slam this finding, arguing that video games do not directly correlate with crime. A commonly cited example of augmenting this argument is regarding the Call of Duty video game. Critiques argue that if one plays Call of duty for three hours, they may feel somehow propelled but they are not likely to go out and rob people. The debate on which argument or research is valid is unending.

There are several gaps in the current knowledge on video games and crime. For instance, many researchers do not clarify which specific video games they are addressing. The audience may interpret that the subject of the matter is just any video games while the real subject is specifically “Violent Video Games”. Another significant gap in the knowledge regarding video games and crime is in regard to characters utilized in the video games. In this regard, sufficient attention has not been devoted by researchers to determine the severity of the violent content in the video games. For instance, researchers have not determined the difference in the impact of cartoonish violence and realistic violence. On the same note, some studies have suggested that cartoonish violence are just as harmful as those that feature realistic violence. Research does not sufficiently provide evidence to make clear whether the socially acceptable violence has different effects to antisocial violence. Even though there is a consensus that some community members such as people with psychotic characters may be highly affected by violent video games, there is mixed arguments for whether violent video games greatly impact children per se.

It would therefore be recommendable that in-depth research be conducted to determine the impact the characters in the video games e.g. cartoonish violence or realistic violence have on both adults and children. The in-depth research should indicate whether these characters have different or similar effects on the subjects. Further, sufficient attention should be devoted to determine the severity ⁴ of the impacts of video games on aggression and crime. The devoted attention should strive to determine whether the violent video games have a direct relation to crime or there are other factors that count. Overall, ¹ research on the correlation between violent video games and crime is highly contested and inclusive.

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