The Effect of Video Games Towards Children's Communication

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Abstract. The significant popularity of video games and their ability to make players enjoy the participation of players to play video games rapidly led to the video game industry transitioning from the entertainment side to being involved in most other aspects of life. This study researches how video games affect children's communication. The method of this paper is qualitative, which analyses content from previous studies that conduct surveys and interviews towards children and their parents regarding the children's communication skills, behaviour pro-social skills and speech development. This study aims to explore if video games positively or negatively affect children aged 7 to 12 years in terms of their online and offline social skills, problem behaviour, pro-social behaviour and speech development. The finding of this study is that video games affect children's communication more negatively toward their social skills, problem behaviour, and pro-social behaviour.

Keywords: Video games, children, problem behaviour, pro-social behaviour, speech development, information management.

1   Introduction

Video games are a significant amusement, particularly among children and teenagers (Forsans, 2011; Lenhart et al., 2008). The proliferation of the internet and the advent of smartphones substantially influenced the utilisation of diverse electronic devices for engaging in video games. Undoubtedly, the video game business has seen a remarkable surge in growth throughout the past decade (Kefalis, Konsustavlou & Drigas. 2020). The popularity of playing games has led Communication Researchers and Media Psychologists to investigate the factors that contribute to the enjoyable experience of playing these games (Malone, 1981). However, concerns about playing video games have

grown due to the constant demand for improvement in video games and their strategies. Furthermore, the majority of players are children or teenagers, contradicting the stereotype that video games are only for entertainment or to pass the time (Arnett, 2002).

Donati, Chiesi, Ammannato and Primi (2015) revealed a notable prevalence of video gamers within the juvenile population, suggesting that almost 90% of adolescents engage in video gaming. The average duration dedicated to video gaming is estimated to range from 11.3 (Greenberg et al., 2010) to 13.2 hours per week (Gentile, 2009). Usually, the main reason that most people play video games is to develop a competitive attitude among other players. Competitive elements are considered the most significant determinant of enjoyment obtained from video gaming. Although the simple exploration of available acting options can be entertaining, the suspenseful coping with challenges such as tasks, dangers, and threats that can lead to gratifying success appears to be the most important source of entertainment during the playing process.

Now that video games have been around for almost half a century. There are generally some good and bad in practising them. For example, recent research results demonstrate that helpful and pro-social computer game content has much potential for improving children's and teenagers' lives. However, exposure to anti-social and violent games raises the chance of a variety of harmful consequences, with more exposure increasing the risk (Anderson & Warburton, 2012). Other than that, playing video games may provide opportunities for addressing primary human wants that are not easily met in the real world (Ferguson & Olson, 2013). Competence needs, for example, may be viewed as general needs to have fun, achieve victories and successes, and be the best at something. Video games may also provide opportunities for individuals to connect socially through gameplay, based on their social relatedness needs. In contrast, the need for autonomy suggests that individuals may use video games as a source where they can feel in control and even powerful, possibly in ways that are not possible in the real world.

Recent technological advancements have interrupted many children's addiction to computer games by diverting their attention away from other outdoor activities or traditional sports. Addiction to slots, for example, the PlayStation, is becoming a significant issue that must be addressed. As this issue of video game obsession has risen for a long time, research is vital to identify the specific effects, consequences or factors which led to this problem. According to Lenhart (2008), video games have instantly become a universal aspect of child development, and their rapid rise has sparked scientific inquiry and public concern (Ferguson, 2013). This obsession has developed a few problems in children's communication. Firstly, there is a research gap in the relationship between problem behaviour and children's communication. Previous studies have shown that some video games, like first-person shooter games and other violent video games, may lead to increased appearance of external behaviour problems of players, such as aggressive behaviour. These findings were based on the fact that violent video games contain many violent and aggressive scenes which will convert to real-life violence. Barlett (2008) concluded that the higher the level of realism in violent video games, the higher the aggressive behaviour the players will get.

Secondly, there is also a gap in the relationship between online and offline social skills and children's communication. Adolescents who have attention issues and are

socially vulnerable (i.e., lack social skills or struggle with social relationships) are more likely to develop symptoms of Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD) (Peeters, 2018). Besides that, there is also a research gap about the relationship between problem behaviour and children's communication. Video games can impact the development of certain human behaviours, whether these behaviours are good or bad. Several studies have found gender differences in the risk of developing problematic gaming behaviours. For example, in the absence of positive online social interactions, boys who are lonely and socially anxious are significantly more likely to engage in problematic gaming behaviours (Carras, 2017). The positive effects that video games may have on players' personalities are such as improving social skills, mental skills and finding solutions, while the adverse effects are such as violence, aggression, anxiety and stress.

Other than that, a significant concern about problematic gaming behaviours is whether excessive time spent displaces real-life social interactions, whether this is necessarily harmful or "engaged," and for whom. Therefore, video games have been studied by many researchers in the fields of computer science, psychology, education and youth studies. These studies also investigate whether video games affect the player's behaviours and emotions during playing or after completing the game for a short or long time. In this case, we found that the development of video games nowadays has and may affect gamers, mainly underaged children, in their communication skills whereby they have no idea about the proper way to interact with people online and face-to-face other than not being able to differentiate the goods and bads during the interactions with other players. Through the social compensation hypothesis (Valkenburg, 2007), it is also said that adolescents who struggle with face-to-face social competency can use online interactions as a safety net to compensate for their real-life social limitations. Thus, the main problem found in the context of this study is that video games affect children's communication skills in terms of online and offline social skills, problem behaviour, pro-social behaviour, and speech development.

2   Literature Review

2.1 Online and offline social skills

Socialising is one of the most essential aspects of children's growth (Beatty, 2020) as it helps build bonds with parents, siblings and peers and sharpen their communication skills. Based on this research, we found out that the habit among today's children playing video games has impacted their social skills significantly in online and offline communication. Chris (2006) mentioned that video gaming positively impacts children's social skills, for instance, by encouraging collaborative communication and developing discussion with one another actively (while playing video games). Children with a low rate of playing video games and socialising online will have a slow process in developing social skills online and offline. Muhannad (2019), on the other hand, disagrees with this statement as most video game players may develop different effects on an individual (unintentionally) no matter how long they spend playing video games. For instance, the data that have been attached by Muhannad (2019) have shown various

negative impacts (e.g. anxiety, aggression, and social withdrawal) on how video games can affect children.

2.2 Problem behavior

Mostly, children exposed to excessive video game playing tend to have a behavioural problem which affects their communication development the most. Beatty (2020) agrees with this statement, whereas screen time shall help kids balance their social development online and offline. There is also a statement by Muhannad (2019) that somehow agrees with Beatty's (2019) statement, whereas the effects of video games on players' behaviour can be positive, such as improving social skills, mental skills, and problem-solving abilities. It can also harm the personalities of the players, such as violence, aggression, anxiety, and stress.

However, on the other hand, without any initiative to control the content that is being exposed to the children, especially regarding digital gaming content that is not suitable for their age (game genre), it can cause trauma, affecting their behaviour and becoming more violent. Muhannad (2019) mentioned that each gaming genre/type should impact children differently. In comparison to non-gamers, high-risk gamers reported more depressive symptoms and problematic internet behaviours, as well as less sleep and a higher frequency of checking social media. High-risk gamers also played for extended periods, were less likely to play alone, and were more likely to play with unknown players than low-risk gamers (Charmaraman, 2020).

2.3 Pro-social behaviour

According to Stiff (1998), this occurs when children fail to develop an emotional contagion, making them less sensitive and responsive. Lobel (2017) mentioned that this might have happened due to violent gaming among children. Supported by the content analysis, as we can see from Table 1.0, model two and model three develop less pro-social behaviour compared to model one, which is a no-risk gamer. When children develop pro-social behaviour, it will help improve their communication skills (Stiff, 1998).

2.4 Speech development

Video games can be considered a new communication platform with interactive features allowing players to communicate. This has come to our concern on how this feature will affect the children's communication development either positively or otherwise. According to Subrahmanyam & Greenfield (2008), peer communication is one of the most popular uses of technology that aligns with the features of video games stated earlier. The question in this discussion is whether the types of communication suit specific age groups, as the audience is primarily children whose basic understanding of language starts at a very young age (Buckingham, 2005). Based on the content analysis, we found out that children with aggressive consumption of video games will experience an inhibition of skills, significantly impacting their communication skills.

Video games can help improve and develop children's literacy in communication (Bailey, 2006). It can be considered as one of the learning mediums for children to improve their communication skills, where it can help them build confidence, construct ideas and sentences, deliver ideas, and respond. This statement is supported by Beatty (2020), who has proven that kids with the right amount of screen use benefit themselves; for instance, it helps improve the children's vocabulary and increases their I.Q. level (Mackey, 2011). Even video games might help speed the development of the communication process among children (Bailey, 2006). However, it also might affect and deface the children's ways of communicating as they are exposed to negative terms in communication that are not suited to their age, for instance, assaulting, slur, blasphemy, inappropriate words and many more.

In some cases, this has caused the children to be traumatised and begin to develop bad communication skills (verbal and nonverbal), which also lead to aggressive behaviour (Muhannad, 2019). It has caused the children to be scared and become more sensitive during the communication process. Some also will develop an aggressive communication style (Muhannad, 2019) at such an early age as being exposed to a hostile environment.

3 Research Methodology

This research aims to examine if video games positively or negatively influence children aged 7 to 12 years in terms of their online and offline social skills, problem behaviour, pro-social behaviour, and speech development.

The objectives of the study are:
1. To discover how much time they spend playing video games on their device's screen.
2. To explore if the communication they learn in video games directly or indirectly impacts their behaviour.
3. To investigate if these video games have more positive or negative effects on children's development in terms of speech.

This paper researches how video games affect children's level of communication skills. The data approach that we used is qualitative, which is secondary data collected from several journals that we studied regarding the effect of video games on children's communication because their data and results are more precisely through some surveys and interviews that the researchers conducted. Online databases from other journals relatable to this research purpose have been used for relevant studies. All the journals have complied with the inclusion criteria. The inclusion indicators were level of social skill, problem behaviour, pro-social behaviour and speech development aspects among the children who spend time on screen to play video games. This field would benefit significantly from validated measures that quantify or categorise the level of social skill, problem behaviour, pro-social behaviour and speech development processes in

communication being activated by different games and game types and accurately measure video game sessions' social environment.

3.1 Participants

Based on the journals studied, the studies were conducted on several children aged between 7 to 12 and enrolled in a survey and interview from different schools, places, and exposure to find a correlation between video games and children's level communication skills including social skill, behaviour problems, pro-social behaviour and speech development. With the sample from other journals, this paper divides the participants involved into three categories according to the number of hours playing video games, namely no-risk gamers, which are children who spend zero hours playing video games; moderate-risk gamers with 1-3 hours of playing video games and high-risk gamers that spend time on video games to 3 hours and above.

3.2 Procedure

After the participants from all journals were divided into three groups of gamers, the data collected from each journal were analysed as a result against these three categories of participants, and we obtained a content analysis regarding several effects involving children's level communication skills, including social skill, problem behaviour, pro-social behaviour and speech development. Based on the content obtained from the journals, not all have adverse effects on children's communication, but some journals found that video games can also benefit players.

3.3 Measures

Screen time, co-viewing, children's development activities, and feeding difficulties were collected by other researchers. Screen time was measured by Beatty's (2020) study, using the question, "How many hours is your child usually exposed to a screen (computer, television, mobile phones) daily?" ''No screen time,'' ''One to less than two hours,'' ''Two to less than three hours,'' and ''More than three hours.'' These variables were used as reference categories. Over half of the study sample was contained in these categories and categorised into three categories: no-risk, moderate-risk, and high-risk gamers. The effects of video games towards children's level of communication skill is measured by collected data from other journals using self-reported data.

4   Conclusions

This paper examines the relationship between how video gaming affects children's communications, either positively or otherwise. This paper has found that video gaming has proven to negatively impact children's communication skills, especially without adult supervision on screen time. This statement is well supported by Beatty (2020), as

screen time is one of the initiatives to contain the adverse effects of excessive video gaming. This paper also has mentioned its variables based on previous scholars' data: video games can affect children's social skills online and offline, their behaviour, pro-social behaviour and speech development.

Briefly, in terms of social skills online and offline, video games have proven to negatively impact children's communication skills, such as they tend to adapt to unsuitable kinds of communication for their age. It has caused some kids to be traumatised from socialising, and some of them tend to develop more aggressive types of communication. Video games also have proven that they affect children's behaviour to become more violent based on the types of game genres they are playing (e.g., FSS, Fantasy) (Muhannad, 2019). Regarding pro-social behaviour, the content analysis has shown that children who consume most of their time playing video games have the lowest interactivity with people around them as they spend more time on video games and tend to isolate themselves. Finally, no significant changes have been shown regarding speech development, as video games mainly impact children regarding behavioural and social interaction.

Based on these variables, it is believed that the screen time theory suggested by Beatty (2020) and games classification data by Muhannad (2019) have shown that without any supervision by parents, video games will bring more negative impacts on children's communication development. As a qualitative research paper, it is hoped that soon, extensive research should be held with a proper content analysis so that more accurate and updated details could be updated as digital media are always kept updating, and so is human behaviour.

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