THE IMPACT OF VIRTUAL GAMES ON YOUTH CONSCIOUSNESS

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Annotation: This article explores the impact of virtual games on the behavior, consciousness, and future of young people. In the 21st century, during the era of digital technologies, such virtual games have become an integral part of youth's daily lives. The article highlights both the positive and negative effects of virtual games on young individuals, including their psychological and mental impacts. Moreover, it provides several recommendations on how to prevent the negative consequences of such games before they begin to harm children's consciousness. The role of parents, teachers, and educators is emphasized as crucial in this regard. Research shows that the influence of virtual games varies depending on the process and manner of usage. Therefore, this topic remains highly relevant today, playing a significant role in the future, health, and upbringing of the younger generation.

Key words: Virtual games, impact on youth consciousness, psychological health, health problems, eye health, parental control.

Introduction

In today's rapidly modernizing world, everything is becoming increasingly online, which has completely transformed how people—especially young individuals spend their free time. Among the tools of digital technology, virtual games have become one of the most widespread and popular forms of entertainment, evolving to offer experiences that closely resemble real life. These games attract young people with their graphic visuals, unique characters, and interactive elements, drawing in a large number of users, including youth. As a result, virtual games have spread globally and have become an inseparable part of modern youth culture. The growing popularity of such games has caught the attention of many specialists, psychologists, researchers, and parents, leading to widespread debate. On one hand, virtual games are credited for

promoting online communication, logical thinking, problem-solving, and other positive aspects. On the other hand, concerns have been raised about their negative impact on youth, including behavioral changes, weakening eyesight, social isolation, and a decline in academic interest. Today, virtual games significantly influence young people's worldview, consciousness, and lifestyle. Therefore, understanding their deep psychological and social effects is of great importance. Furthermore, preventing youth from becoming excessively involved in such games largely depends on the role of parents and teachers.

Advantages of virtual games

Since virtual games have become widespread across countries around the world, young people are showing great interest in them, and many of these games have shown positive aspects.

1. Develops logical thinking

As players spend more time in online games, they begin to feel and understand the situations in the game, finding solutions to different problems. This helps improve their critical thinking skills.

2. Enhances creativity

Games that involve design and construction can increase creativity and boost a child's imagination. For example, games like Minecraft and Roblox have many beneficial features in this regard.

3. Improves quick thinking and decision-making skills

Quick decision-making is crucial in many games because unexpected situations may arise, and failure to make timely decisions can lead to losing in the game. For instance, in PUBG, making quick decisions is key to success.

We summarize the research on the benefits of playing video games, focusing on four main domains: cognitive (e.g., attention), motivational (e.g., resilience in the face of failure), emotional (e.g., mood management), and social (e.g., prosocial behavior) benefits[Granic, I.2014].

4. Develops teamwork skills

Many games involve forming teams and collaborating with other players, where tasks are shared and communication is essential. In addition, players can make friends from other countries, which helps improve social interaction and openness. Games provide a wide range of novel cognitive challenges, opportunities for exploration, relaxation, and socialization with peers. Research focusing on the potential benefits of games indicates they may bolster adjustment by providing psychologically rewarding experiences that dispel negative affect, inspire prosocial behavior, foster creativity, as well as broaden self-concept and build social connections[Przybylski, A, K. 2014].

5. Helps with learning technical skills and foreign languages

Most games are played in English or Russian, giving players the opportunity to improve their language skills. Additionally, communication during teamwork is often done in a foreign language. Players also need to use various technical tools and strategies during gameplay, which enhances their tech-savviness.

Negative effects on youth consciousness

Along with the positive effects of video games, there are also negative aspects.

1. Increase in violence and aggression

Many online games are primarily based on aggressive content, such as setting traps for opponents or scenes involving killing enemies. This can negatively influence a child's mind and may lead them to imitate such violent behaviors in real life. Scientists have conducted many studies that compare the aggression levels of participants who play violent video games.

-General aggression (in this particular case, the working definition used for aggression is "behavior intended to harm another person")

 -Aggressive thoughts,

-Aggressive feelings

-Arousal (heart rate, blood pressure)[Anderson, C,A. 2001]

2. Social isolation and loneliness

As children become increasingly engaged in these games, they may grow overly attached, making gaming a central part of their daily life. This can lead to withdrawal from social interactions, distancing them from friends, real-life activities, and the outside world in general. The video gaming world has been established, but the actual physical and psychosocial effects of video gaming have not. As the MMOG world increases in popularity and acceptance, the need for evidence-based research becomes critical so that attention can be paid to prevention, education, and treatment of any negative consequences that MMOG play has on its playing population[Victoria Anne Sublette & Barbara Mullan.2012].

3. Negative impact on education

Children who become addicted to such games tend to prioritize gaming over studying or completing homework. As a result, their academic performance declines, they lose their standing in school, and their discipline is negatively effect.

4. Health-related problems

Firstly, vision deterioration occurs due to constant screen exposure and sitting in front of it for long periods. Secondly, back and neck pain may develop, as well as spinal misalignment due to poor posture. Thirdly, sleep disorders such as insomnia arise because late-night gaming disrupts the natural sleep schedule. Only three studies looked specifically at sleep quality: one found a significant negative association between video gaming and sleep quality, whereas two found no significant association. Of the five studies that looked at other sleep outcomes, all of them found statistically significant associations with video gaming[Hale, L & Guan, S. 2015].

4. Social and Psychological Impact

First of all, self-confidence significantly decreases, as the easily achieved successes in the virtual world distract from real-life challenges. Relationships with family and close friends deteriorate, leading to a sense of distance and detachment from the family. Results suggest that greater amounts of gaming, lower social competence, and greater impulsivity seemed to predict the development of pathological gaming. Furthermore, pathological gaming seemed to cause poorer school performance and

increased levels of depression, anxiety, and social phobia over time[Gentile et al., 2011, p. e326].

Solutions and recommendation

Parental and Teacher Supervision. Of course, not all online games should be strictly prohibited for children; rather, games should be selected according to their age. In addition, parents and educators should spend more time with their children and pay attention to their interests.

Time Limitation. Parents should set specific time limits for their children to play virtual games and help them maintain a balance between studying, reading, resting, and participating in physical activities such as sports.

Greater amounts of gaming, lower social competence, and greater impulsivity seemed to act as risk factors for becoming pathological gamers, whereas depression, anxiety, social phobias, and lower school performance seemed to act as outcomes of pathological gaming[Griffths, M, D.2005].

Priority to Educational Methods

Priority should be given to educational approaches. Various engaging methods, such as games that promote logical thinking, scientific curiosity, and language learning, should be chosen.

Increase in Physical Activity

- Go to the gym 3 or 4 times a week and engage in sports activities.

- Take walks in the open air, spend time outdoors, and participate in group games.

- After each online gaming session, do short exercises for the eyes and spinal health.

Conclusion

In today's digital era, virtual games have become an integral part of young people's lives. With their engaging gameplay, high-quality graphics, and interactive features, they attract the attention of the younger generation. When used properly, virtual games can help develop logical thinking, quick decision-making, creativity, and teamwork skills. However, when their use goes beyond control, they can lead to

negative consequences. Research and observations show that excessive gaming can result in increased aggression, social isolation, lack of focus on studies, mental fatigue, and health problems among youth. Moreover, when young people experience success in the virtual world, they may start avoiding real-life challenges, which can reduce their self-confidence and weaken their relationships with family and society. Therefore, maintaining balance in the use of virtual games is essential. Parents, educators, and members of society should monitor young people's digital activities, guide them towards beneficial games, and encourage them to engage in real-life activities. In addition, helping them manage their time wisely, stay physically active, adopt a healthy lifestyle, and receive psychological support can reduce the negative impact of virtual gaming.

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