

Addiction to Electronic Games Among teenagers and Its Role in the Emergence of Certain Psychological and Educational Disorders

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Abstract:

Video Games Are A Double-Edged Sword. On The Positive Side, They Contribute To The Intellectual Development Of Teenagers And Support Their Psychological And Emotional Growth. However, Their Negative Impact Has Increasingly Overshadowed These Benefits, Especially In Cases Of Addiction. Since Adolescence Is A Critical Stage Of Development, Excessive Gaming Can Lead To Severe Consequences Affecting The Physical, Psychological, Cognitive, Social, Religious, And Cultural Aspects Of An Individual. Moreover, It May Result In More Serious Complications, Including Various Psychological Disorders. Understanding These Effects And Consequences Helps In Assessing The Severity Of The Issue, Enabling Us To Develop Preventive And Therapeutic Strategies To Address It. This Study Aims To Shed Light On These Aspects.

Keywords: Video Game Addiction , Teenagers , Psychological And Educational Disorders

1. Introduction

There is no doubt that play is important and necessary in the life of any child or adolescent. It comes in many different types and forms, which have evolved significantly over time, especially in our modern era. With advancements in technology, numerous electronic devices and games have emerged and spread widely due to extensive market promotion and high demand. These games can be downloaded from the internet, played on electronic devices, or enjoyed in entertainment venues specifically designed for them, attracting adolescents of various ages and developmental stages.

Any behavior or action exhibited by an adolescent is considered natural if it aligns with the values, norms, and cultural and social traditions of their society, as well as their physical and cognitive development. However, if it exceeds these norms and standards and occurs repeatedly, it can be classified as deviant or disordered behavior. This also applies to electronic gaming; when practiced within normal limits, it can positively contribute to the adolescent's personality development. However, if it exceeds these limits, it falls into the category of psychological disorders (Qadri, 2022, p. 208) or may lead to psychological disturbances, such as gaming addiction.

Based on the above, the following question arises: What are the negative effects of gaming addiction on adolescents, and how does it contribute to the emergence of psychological disorders?

I - Definition of Terms:

1.1 Electronic Games:

Electronic games refer to a type of games displayed on a computer screen (video games), providing individuals with enjoyment through hand-eye coordination (visual-motor synchronization) or cognitive abilities, made possible by the development of electronic programs (Abdul Karim, Shabib Mohammed, 2022, p. 551.)

1.2Gaming Addiction:

Heron & Shapira define gaming addiction as "a behavioral disorder characterized by a loss of control over internet usage time, experiencing significant distress, excessive time consumption, and facing social, occupational, and financial difficulties" (Shaker, 2023, p. 26.)

Similarly, Weinstein defines it as "excessive use of electronic games in a way that affects daily life" (Al-Sharifain & Al-Dar'an, 2017, p. 454.)

From these definitions, it is evident that gaming addiction is indeed a disorder and can be classified as a behavioral disorder. Both definitions highlight indicators that suggest an individual has reached the stage of behavioral addiction. This aligns with the criteria of abnormality, as excessive gaming significantly impacts social, occupational, and personal aspects of life, as well as the inability to control the duration and persistence of gameplay over an extended period.

I-3 teenagers

Adolescence refers to the stage of approaching physical, mental, psychological, and social maturity, but it is not full maturity itself. During this phase, individuals begin developing in these aspects; however, they do not reach complete maturity until several years later, which may take up to ten years (Al-Shafi'i, 2009, p. 13.)

I-4 Psychological Disorders

According to the Encyclopedia of Psychology and Psychoanalysis, the term "disorder" linguistically means corruption, weakness, or dysfunction. It is a term commonly used in clinical psychology and psychiatry, referring to disorders that affect different aspects of personality. In general, a disorder represents a group of conditions that reflect an individual's maladjustment. Therefore, many concepts

describe various disorders, such as perceptual disorders, personality disorders, and others (Ghanem, 2006, p. 18)

Additionally, a psychological disorder is defined as a condition characterized by abnormal thoughts, emotions, and behaviors

(Weiser, 2014, p. 548.)

1-5 Learning Disorders

The National Committee in the United States defines the term "Learning disabilities" as a diverse group of disorders That manifest as difficulties in acquiring auditory, verbal, Reading, writing, analytical, and mathematical skills, as well as in using these abilities (Mahmoud Aman, Saber Samia: Some Psychological and Behavioral Characteristics of Students with Learning Disabilities, Arab Child Hood Journal, Issue 19, August 2004).

Some of the key characteristics of an adolescent with a Learning disability include:

Difficulties in perceiving and interpreting Visual and auditory information.

Inability to retain or recall information from memory.

Difficulty following oral and written instructions, as well as solving problems.

Weak ability to use strategies for dealing with different situations.

II- Previous Studies on the Topic

Study by Abdel Aal (2019)

This study aimed to explore the correlation between video game addiction and the emergence of certain psychological and social disorders among adolescents. The sample included 47 middle and high school students. The researcher used a questionnaire to collect data through personal interviews with the students. The study employed a

descriptive approach and utilized a video game addiction scale developed by the researcher, along with scales measuring violence, social isolation, and depression. The findings revealed a statistically significant correlation between video game addiction and variables such as violence, social isolation, and depression among the adolescent participants.

Study by Sayed Ahmed (2020)

This study investigated the relationship between maladaptive cognitive schemas and video game addiction. The researcher used a descriptive methodology and selected a sample of 215 female students. Data were collected using the Young Schema Questionnaire by Jeffrey Young and a video game addiction scale designed by the researcher. The study found a statistically significant correlation between the psychological and social aspects of video game addiction and maladaptive cognitive schemas. The most predictive maladaptive cognitive schemas influencing video game addiction primarily affected the student's social life, followed by psychological factors.

Study by Marah and Kadiri (2022)

This study aimed to examine the impact of violent video games, particularly Free Fire, and to explore the relationship between addiction to Free Fire and the emergence of deviant behaviors among adolescent students. The sample consisted of 146 middle and high school students who played Free Fire regularly. The researchers used a descriptive methodology and employed a questionnaire to collect data. The study concluded that addiction to Free Fire among adolescent students leads to aggressive and deviant behaviors.

Study by Boufra and Mokhtar (2023)

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between video game addiction and psychological disorders among middle school students. The randomly selected sample comprised 61 students (37 males and 24 females). The researchers used a descriptive

approach and applied two data collection tools: a video game addiction scale, adopting a section from Al-Anzi's (2020) video game addiction scale consisting of 10 items, and a psychological disorder scale by Mansouri and Bouqara, which included 22 items. The study found a positive correlation between video game addiction and psychological symptoms, including anxiety, fear, social isolation, depression, loneliness, family relationship disturbances, and reduced social interaction.

III- Adolescents and Video Game Addiction

Playing is an innate behavior and an essential part of human development. Adolescents need to play and have fun to ensure balanced psychological growth, especially during this sensitive stage of their lives. As a result, they often turn to video games as a means to satisfy their natural urge to play, given that these games are the predominant form of entertainment in the modern era. The concept of play has evolved significantly with technological advancements, making video games more than just a simple pastime (Chaib, Ibraim, & Achour, 2020, pp. 206-207)

Video games have broken all geographical boundaries, attracting a vast audience across various categories. Adolescents, in particular, are drawn to these games due to their engaging features, such as vibrant colors, lighting effects, sounds, and captivating characters that influence their entire being.

When adolescents engage in these games continuously and repetitively, it is often driven by a desire to experience excitement and a sense of power, as well as to escape physical and personal emptiness during this phase. Additionally, they use video games as a means to avoid real-world problems and negative family interactions by immersing themselves in the entertaining and stimulating virtual world (Al-Asmari, 2023, pp. 303-304). Due to these motivations and the characteristics of adolescence—such as curiosity, experimentation, and adventure—the phenomenon of video game addiction develops as

a result of the interplay between these factors. The interaction between the adolescent and the game serves as the mechanism through which this addiction is formed.

Adolescents absorb encoded messages embedded in video games through their engagement with in-game characters, to the extent that they may imitate their behavior in real life. This includes violent acts or theft, particularly in cases of addiction to such games. Several studies have highlighted this issue, including those by Aissou & Boucherbi (2020) and Qadi (2018.)

Moreover, the negative thoughts that adolescents adopt can lead them into the trap of video game addiction, potentially resulting in psychological disorders if left unaddressed. These negative thoughts, as discussed in the study by Direktor et al. (2017), are automatic or cognitive perceptions triggered by specific situations due to an activated cognitive schema. These thoughts are interconnected with emotions and behavioral reactions. They contribute to several mental health issues, including anxiety, stress, and psychological pressure, as emphasized by Albert Ellis in his Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) theory (Al-Asmari, 2023, p. 305)

Referring to Weiser's definition of psychological disorders mentioned earlier, it closely aligns with the topic of this study. Video game addiction stems from adolescents adopting irrational and false beliefs, leading to emotional and psychological reactions that manifest in their intense interaction with video games. This excessive engagement results in heightened tension and an unhealthy attachment to gaming, ultimately leading to behavioral addiction and an increased risk of psychological disorders.

IV- The Relationship Between Video Game Addiction and the Emergence of Psychological Disorders

IV-1 Theories Explaining Video Game Addiction

Social Theory: Sociologists interpret addiction as a complete desire in an individual to surpass and dominate others. These two desires drive the person to do whatever it takes to achieve them. From this social perspective, addiction is not seen as a psychological disorder or illness but rather as a social trick or strategy to fulfill these desires (Nasser, 2022, p. 448)

Psychoanalytic Theory: Advocates of psychoanalytic theory explain game addiction as a means for individuals to experience pleasure and emotional release (Al-Dash, 2022, p. 199). From this perspective, it can be inferred that the pleasure experienced by children and adolescents through gaming may lead them to repeat the activity to relive that pleasure. This repetition can, in turn, result in addiction, including addiction to video games.

Cultivation Theory: This theory, influenced by symbolic interactionism, was developed by George Gerbner, considered the founding figure of the theory. It posits that repeated exposure to media content that differs from real-life social contexts influences viewers' perceptions of reality, making them see the mediated reality as the actual one. According to this theory, video games have the power to shape adolescents' knowledge and perceptions, and frequent exposure to their content leads players to adopt cultural elements embedded in the games (Abdel Aal, 2019, p. 564)

Behavioral Theory: This perspective considers video game addiction a learned behavior governed by the principles of stimulus-response, reinforcement, and conditioning, making it modifiable. The theory is based on B.F. Skinner's viewpoint that individuals engage in specific behaviors and activities to receive rewards or reinforcements. Playing video games brings happiness, comfort, and psychological enjoyment, and it provides an easy escape from reality while offering behavioral

reinforcements (Shaker, 2023, p. 27). As a result, the behavior of playing these games continues and is repeated to obtain rewards (reinforcement), eventually leading to addiction.

IV-2 The Negative Effects of Video Game Addiction on Adolescents

Most Arab and foreign studies have confirmed the significant negative effects of video game addiction. These negative consequences vary depending on different aspects of an adolescent's personality and life. Below are some of the key negative impacts in more detail:

Health Effects: Some recent medical studies have revealed that prolonged daily engagement with video games leads to serious health consequences for users, including weakened eyesight, epileptic seizures in adolescents, obesity, and poor nutrition due to lack of physical activity and frequent consumption of fast food (Sarah & Qadiri, 2022, p. 224.)

Social Effects: Adolescents addicted to video games become so engrossed in them that they may refuse to leave their rooms, which becomes their only environment for self-expression, fulfillment, and energy release. A study conducted by psychologist David Greenfield indicated that video game addicts often experience isolation and detachment from their surroundings. They lose awareness of time and space to the extent that they become entirely immersed in the game's world (Al-Ghifaili, 2010, pp. 37-38). This detachment may lead them to violate certain social norms and traditions.

Educational and Cognitive Effects

These effects manifest in poor academic performance due to excessive gaming late at night and a general lack of interest in studying. Staying up late causes teenagers to struggle with waking up early for school or, in some cases, not waking up at all. Researcher Raafat Salah El-Din emphasized that one of the most significant consequences is a decline in vocabulary memory due to the intense focus on visual

content. This results in decreased linguistic intelligence, attention deficit, lack of concentration, and impaired thinking ability (Motalawi, 2022, pp. 99-100.)

Religious and Doctrinal Effects

These effects appear in various aspects, such as disrespecting the Holy Quran and Islamic symbols, including the promotion of witchcraft and sorcery. Moreover, some games introduce even more deviant and misleading principles, such as portraying Muslims as enemies who must be eliminated. These games provoke hostility against Muslims, especially among addicted players. Some game-producing companies exploit these platforms to undermine values and beliefs among teenagers (Kouider, 2012, p. 150.)

Cultural Effects

Video game addiction reinforces foreign customs and values, leading to the erosion of native culture, particularly the Islamic-based culture among teenagers in Muslim countries.

Al-Ansari's (2020) study highlighted the most significant negative impacts of video games on children's cultural development. The top three effects were ranked as follows: addiction to electronic gaming and neglect of religious duties, exposure to undesirable role models, and finally, the encouragement of violence and aggressive behavior (Al-Ansari, 2020, p. 328.)

From the above, it is evident that the negative effects of video game addiction on teenagers are profound and widespread, affecting all aspects of their lives. These effects threaten their entire well-being and may lead to severe psychological disorders that endanger both their present and future. Therefore, efforts must be mobilized to combat this addiction and protect young people from its harmful consequences

Conclusion:

From all that has been presented, it can be concluded that video game addiction is a disorder in itself (a behavioral disorder) and a contributing factor to the emergence of certain psychological disorders. A teenager addicted to these games experiences a disruption in engaging in other essential activities in their life, whether academic, social, health-related (such as sports), religious, or recreational (such as trips and participation in cultural clubs, etc.). The addicted teenager plays for extended, frequent, and continuous periods, sometimes for hours in a single day, leading to insufficient sleep or even complete sleep deprivation. Based on the criteria of duration, intensity, and repetition, such behavior falls within the classification of a behavioral disorder.

This disorder can lead to various psychological issues, as highlighted in previous studies. It may contribute to anxiety, depression, social interaction difficulties, and even deviant or aggressive behaviors. Therefore, the following measures are proposed as preventive strategies against this behavioral addiction:

Recommendations:

Parents must monitor and regulate their children's gaming habits, setting strict guidelines for their use.

Raising awareness among teenagers about the dangers of excessive gaming before they fall into addiction.

Parents should actively listen to their teenagers' problems and take the initiative to resolve them.

Increasing awareness among both teenagers and parents about the severe psychological disorders resulting from video game addiction. This addiction is not just a risk but has more serious consequences, including mental health disorders.

Authorities and relevant institutions should take the findings of such studies into consideration to protect families and society from psychological disorders and illnesses.

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