

Induction of Violent Characters through Video Games: A case study of Primary School going Children in Pakistan

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Abstract: *This study explores the effects of violence in video games on the behavior of the children and to bring awareness about its harmful effects. The research methodology is survey and in the questionnaire, strategy of both open ended and close ended questions is adopted. For this purpose 150 children from three different schools of Lahore Pakistan are selected as a sample of the study. The theoretical support of the study is social cognitive theory which explains learning through observation and model. The study concludes that violence in video games creates a negative impact on children behavior and increase the level of aggression in them and they engage in fights with their peers. Children also try to copy those violent acts which they play in video games.*

Keywords: Violent Videogames, Effects, Aggression, Social learning behavior.

I. INTRODUCTION

The genre of video games has been consumed as a source of entertainment for last many years. Video games are very exclusive usage of amusement because the games make the player an actual lively part of the game's screenplay. Video games need the continuous concentration of player toward the game. According to Corliss (2011) "video games are constituted in part by distinct forms of interactivity, and these forms of interactivity represent a particularly valuable area of investigation" (p.08). The effects of video games are almost doubled as compared to other violent media like TV programs etc because this medium has the capacity of interaction which makes it different from viewing television or movies. Video games allow players to become active part in the game's script. Players become an active participant in the game as a game character selected by the player (Green and Bavelier, 2003, 2006). Due to this interactive characteristic, video games may have positive and as well as negative impacts on game players.

The effects depend upon the nature of the videogames that can be violent and non-violent. For instance, there are different games in the market like *Brain Age*, *Flash Focus: Vision Training in Minutes a Day*, *My Spanish Coach*, and *Left Brain Right Brain* that aims to develop learning, skills, vocabulary, and math among players. There are also games that are considered as educational video games. These educational video games are subject oriented and used for educational purpose for instance algebra (Corbett, Koedinger, & Hadley, 2001), biology (Ybarrondo, 1984), photography (Abrams, 1986), and computer programming (Kahn, 1999) are some examples of educational video games. Though, these video games are not popular as much as the other types of video games are, yet this example can highlight the positive uses and effects of this genre. These games are considered as non-violent video games that have positive effects on the users. But there is almost little research on the effects of these games to know whether they have significant effects (Barlett, Anderson & Swing, 2009, p.388).

As far as violent games are concerned, the player

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interacts with other game characters. They also use different kinds of weapons such as bombs, guns, knives and ax etc. Players engage in these performances of violence and play these violent actions to move in to the next level of the game. Video games provide a sense of virtual reality to their players. They feel and imagine that they are in that situations or they are visiting those new imagined virtual worlds. They fantasize that they are going to experience new and challenging scenarios while sitting on the chair in their rooms in front of the computers or other digital media. In this way, they start to mimic those violent actions that are the phases of a particular violent game (Dil & Dil, 1998). Throughout the video game, violent acts are repeated so this may increase aggressive behavior in the player. Such a way of repetition has become a way of learning and children learn wrong patterns of behavior which increase the level of aggression in their lives (Byrd, 2007; Grusser et al., 2007; Nikken and Jansz, 2006). While playing, video games also encourage the players to copy their favorite game characters in their daily life because it has a strong impact on the minds and behavior of the players. "Violent video game exposure may shape the player's behaviour because constant playing reinforces the belief that hurting others is a successful way to resolve conflict" (Barlett, Anderson & Swing, 2008, p.381).

Due to growing popularity of violent videogames, the researchers are taking interest in investigation of the harmful effects of video games in different age groups and cultures. For this purpose, a number of studies have been conducted in the genre of video games that include meta-analyses (Anderson, 2004; Anderson and Bushman, 2001) and longitudinal studies (Moller and Krahe, 2009; Wallenius and Punamaki, 2008) who observed the positive and direct causal relationship of violent video games and aggression level among youth. Moreover, the researchers also examined the video games in terms of time-consuming medium and the effects of the results and rewards of the games for the players in sense of power, authority, praise, self competence, over confidence and inferiority etc. (Grusser et al., 2007; Tejeiro and Moran, 2002; Wan and Chiou, 2007). It was also studied that the children who spend a lot of time in playing video games, spend less time in school activities and score lower grades than that of other children (Schmidt & Vandewater, 2008). The result of the game also affects the behavior

and mood of the player. It makes him happy after winning the game or makes him angry or aggressive after losing the game.

In addition to this, six different American Medical Associations conducted research on the effects of violence media in which it was argued that the exposure to violence creates a negative impact on children. They learn wrong patterns of behavior that increase the level of aggression. These effects have a long time effect and may effect throughout their life's (Joint Statement, 2000). Similarly, Bartholow, Bushman, and Sestir (2006) also observed that there are two types of violent video games that high violent video game and low violent video games. They added that players of high violent video games become more desensitized to violence as compared to that of the players of low violent video games that may cause aggression in their behaviour.

Moreover, Carnagey and his colleagues (2007) conducted an experimental research and noticed that "the repeated exposure to violent video games is related to a decrease in cardiovascular indicators of negative emotional reactions to scenes of violence" (as cited in Barlett, Anderson & Swing, 2009, p.391). Similarly, Bushman, Bonacci, Van Dijk, & Baumeister (2003) defined the effects of violent video games. They argued that the violent video games players face the problem of "self-serving interpretations, low empathy towards others, and an inflated sense of entitlement" (p. 1027).

Barlett, Anderson and Swing (2009) also describe a model of aggressive personality development through violent video games. They argued that the repeated exposure towards the violent video games make the players' personality aggressive in terms of making their beliefs and attitude violent, they became desensitize from violence, they consider violence as a normal behaviour and their perceptual and expectation schema become aggressive that lead them towards development of aggressive personality. They stated that "person logical variables (e.g., trait hostility, attitudes toward violence) and situational variables (e.g., exposure to real-world or media violence) interact to influence an individual's present internal state. Within an individual's internal state, cognitions (e.g., aggressive scripts, hostile thoughts), affects (e.g., hostile feelings), and arousals (e.g., heart rate, blood pressure) influence one another" (as cited in Krish, 2002, p.3.83).

The present study addresses the effect of violent

video games on the behavior of the children in Pakistan. It further aims to bring awareness among parents and specially children about it in Pakistan. This is a very famous source of entertainment for children. It also suggests how to save children from its harmful effects in Pakistan.

The researchers selected 7 video games that are *Metal Slug*, *Fighting Slug*, *IGI*, *Taken 3*, *King of Fighter*, *Taken Tag*, and *Resident Evil 4* for this study. Because these video games are full of action, fight and bloodshed. So the researchers want to know that weather these types of video games really effect children behavior, create or enhance aggressiveness among them. So they behave violently. And they copy those violent acts and fighting technique which they play in these video games.

II. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

The theoretical support of the present study is Social Cognitive theory by Bandura, which explains learning behavior by observation or modeling (observation learning). The main concept of the present study is learning through observation and modeling or copying. Theory also describes these concepts. So the researchers want to explore the observational learning and copying from playing violent video games and weather it effects children behavior or they copy those acts in their normal life and playing which they play in video games.

III. METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the present research is Survey Method and questionnaire is selected as a tool of data collection. Questionnaire consists of both open ended and close ended questions. The samples of the present study are the children of school of Lahore Pakistan that range from 5 to 8 classes. Sample sizes of the present study are 150 children from three different schools (50 from each) of Lahore. School and children both are selected through simple random sampling and the accessibility of the researchers.

IV. RESULTS & FINDINGS

It was observed that 65.3% of the respondents of the present research prefer to play video games more than two hours and 34.7% of the research population play games less than two hours so the result depicted

that children spend a lot of time in playing video games (see table 1). Video games have also characteristics to attract the players' attention and involvement because video games allow the players to become active part in game script.

Table 1. Time consumptions in playing video games

Time Consumption	Respondent's	
	Responses (n = 150)	Percentage
Less than 2 hours	52	34.7%
More than 2 hours	98	65.3%

The result also added that 58.7% of the research population liked to play games that are full of fighting, more than 13.3% liked to play action games, 11.3% were those who preferred to play violent games, 12% gave more attention to play adventures games and only 4.7% who liked to play suspense games (see table 2). So the result further elaborated that overall 83.3% of the children preferred to play fighting, action and violent games (see table 2). These fighting and action games affect their behavior and make a negative impact on the children which increase the level of aggression among the children that damage their behavior.

Table 2. Respondents' choices on the basis of the nature of video game

The nature of the game and selection	Respondent's Responses (n = 150)	Percentage
Fighting	88	58.7%
Action	20	13.3%
Violent	17	11.3%
Adventures	18	12%
Suspense	7	4.7%

Furthermore, the result also described that 48.7% of the population liked to play *Taken 3*, 14% prefer to play *King of Fighter*, 9.3% selected to play *Residential Evil 4*, 6.7% liked to play *Fighting Slug*, 13.3% preferred to play *Metal Slug*, 8% liked *Taken Tag* (see table 3). *Taken 3* is a fighting game full of violence and action. It contains time attack, team battle and other fighting techniques. *King of Fighter* is also very violent

and action game. It contains only fighting. Through fighting, one should kill the other player to win the game level. *Resident Evil 4* is a mission game with full of fighting and action. Main character has to rescue a kidnapped girl so he travels to a small village where he encounters a horde of violent village who pledge their lives. Fighting Slug is an action game with full of violence. In this game, one player should kill the other one to win the games' levels. *Metal Slug* game includes the peregrine Faloon squad, a small but skilled team of soldiers, fight to save earth some time with people, sometimes universe of Modern's army with futuristic equipment and weapons. The player controls these soldiers. In *Taken Tag*, the player has to kill the other player to win the game.

Table 3. Respondents' Favorite Game in selected Game Sample

Selected Games	Video Games	Respondents' Response (n = 150)	Percentage
King of Fighter	21	14%	
Resident Evil 4	14	9.3%	
Fighting Slug	10	6.7%	
Metal Slug	20	13.3%	
Taken Tage	12	8%	

While ranking the games, the respondents were more excited towards the fighting and action games as popular choice. According to table 4, 15.3% voted for *Taken tag*, 13.3% liked *Metal slug*, 12.7% voted for *Fighting Slug*, 15.3% voted for *King of fighter*, 13.3% for *Resident evil 4* and 30% voted for *IGI* (see table 4).

Table 4. Ranking of the games among respondents

Ranking Games	of Games	Respondent's Responses (n=150)	Percentage
Taken Tage	23	15.3%	
Metal Slug	20	13.3%	
Fighting Slug	19	12.7%	
King of Fighter	23	15.3%	
Resident Evil 4	20	13.3%	
IGI	45	30%	

In addition to this, almost 68.7% of the population was impressed by any one of the game character (see

table 5). Jin, Behachi, Law, Paul, Adie, Ashley, Leon, Jones and Kyo are some of characters from which children seemed to be impressed. All those characters were portrayed as fighters and action heroes. Children quoted that they liked them because of their fighting techniques like kicks, punch, etc. Children also try to copy these actions in order to be strong and successful fighters like those characters.

Table 5. The trend of getting impressed by game characters

Trends of getting impressed	Respondent's Responses (n=150)	Percentage
Getting impressed by game characters	103	68.7%
Not getting impressed by game characters	47	31.3%

It was also observed that 71.3% of the respondents admitted that they copy different act in their normal life which they play in video games, only 28.7% are those who do not copy these act in their normal life(see table 6).

Table 6. Trend of imitation action after playing in games

Trends of imitation	Respondents' Opinion (n=150)	Percentage
Imitation actions after playing games	107	71.3%
No Imitation actions after playing games	45	28.7%

Children are trying to copy to duplicate those fighting act, free styles and other techniques in their real life which they learn from video games that indicated the impact of video games as a source of negative learning for children. It was also added that 74.7% of the respondents try to act like their favorite game heroes while playing with their friends and in this way it becomes their habit slowly then becomes their behavior and finally they start to behave aggressively in

Fighting-source of Fun	Respondent's Responses (n=150)	Percentage
Yes	119	79.3%
No	31	20.7%

their real life. Whereas only 25.3% are those who negate this behavior (see table 7).

Table 7. Usage of fighting techniques in real life that makes children aggressive

Usage of Fighting techniques	Respondent's Responses (n=150)	Percentage
Yes, we do use	112	74.7%
No, we do not use	38	25.3%

It was further found that 70.7% of the children become aggressive after playing violent video games and only 29.3% are those who do not (see table 8). These violent games affect the behavior of the children and have a negative impact on it. They become angry and engage in fights with their peer groups and family.

Table 8. Observation regarding induction of aggression in children after playing video games

Observation regarding Induction	Respondent's Responses (n=150)	Percentage
Yes, they try to behave accordingly	106	70.7%
No, they try to behave accordingly	44	29.3%

Similarly, it was observed that 79.3% of respondents were taking fighting as a fun or enjoyment and only 20.7% were not (see table 9). Children spend a lot time of time in playing violent video games and now fighting is become a fun and source of enjoyment of the children, which is not a good sign. The result also showed that 64% of the respondents feel direct impact of video games on their moods. Only 15.3% of the children said that it does not make any effect on their

mood. And 20.7% of the children said that the result of the game has some way affect their mood.

Table 9. Fighting in Video game a source of fun

So, mostly the result of the game affect the mood of the children, they become happy after winning the game and become sad after losing it. They involve in the game and enjoy it while fighting with other players. They do not bear that they lose the game. And when they lose the game, they become angry and it affects their mood and behavior (see table 10).

Table 10. The result of the game and its direct effect on your mood after playing

The Games' Result and its effects on mood	Respondent's Responses (n=150)	Percentage
Yes, it does	96	64%
No, it does not	23	15.3%
In Some ways	31	20.7%

Table 11. Parent's involvement in game's selection

Parents' involvement in game selection	Respondents' Opinion (n=150)	Percentage
Yes, they involve	41	27.3%
No, they do not involve	109	72.7%

It was further added that 72.7% of the respondents said that they were not told by their parents that which kind of games they should play and which they should not and only 27.3% said that they were told by their parents (see table 11). There is no guideline provided to the children that what should they play and what should not. It should be the responsibility of the parents to tell their children that which games are good for them. In this way, they can save their children from the harmful effects of these violent games. Parents should have a check on their children that what are the means of entertainment for their children and are they good for them or not.

V. CONCLUSION

To put it into the nutshell, children mostly construct their behavior while playing through observation and whatever they see around them. So when they spend a lot of time in playing violent video games, it damages their behavior and creates negative impact on their behavior. Behavior means one's physical actions, so, the present research added that playing violent video games damage children's behavior in Pakistan. As children admitted that shouting is becoming their habit now, the result of the game effects their mood directly. They become angry if they lose the game and they do not behave normally when they are angry. So it was found that when children expose to violence it creates a negative impact on them and damages their behavior.

It may also be concluded that playing violent video games increases the level of aggression among the children. This issue is addressed in different ways by different scholars as Krish (2003) concluded that "the biological and psychosocial changes of adolescence are associated with a peak in aggressive behavior during early adolescence, the exact period in which violent video game play is at its zenith"(p.387). The result of this study concludes that children imitate what they see. Mostly children learn through copying things what they see while playing or see around them. So children are coping and imitating those acts which they play in video games.

Children are very important member of any society because they are the future of the society, for brighten future of any society, society should give proper attention towards the education and training of their children. Children imitate what they see so proper attention should be given on them so they may not learn wrong patterns.

Games are one of the oldest activities for children in which they take part in different scenario by sitting in front of TV, but now the trend of fighting video games become as compared to other and especially boys are very much interested in fighting games. On other hand the fighting games take over the mind of children as violent games; these games increase the percentage of aggression and violence among children.

Due these actions and fighting games, children

repeat these fighting techniques during normal life. They feel that they have the same power as of their favorite character and to prove this they adopt wrong patterns.

The major problem is that there is no guideline for the children so they do not have any knowledge which game is good for them and which not. This is the responsibility of the parents to guide their children that what should they play or what not and also have a proper check upon it, parents should set a time table for their children that how many hours children can play and should play because parent are the most important for socializing their children in this regard (Carlson et al., 1992; Cram and Ng, 1999; Moschis and Churchill, 1978). In this way we can save children from the harmful effects of exposure to violence through video games as source of entertainment for children. The other solution is to make Entertainment Software Rating Board in Pakistan. Federal government should take action against the commercial sale and online availability of the violent video games (Byrd, 2007; Shin & Huh, 2011).

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