VIDEO GAMES & LIFE SKILLS

JSPM
JOURNAL OF STRATEGY & PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

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Citation: Safdar, W. (2020). Video games and Life Skills, Journal of Strategy and Performance Management, 8 (4), 156-161.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine if there are significant differences in the development of life skills or interpersonal skills such as personal, educational, social, and work-related skills between those who had and had not played video games. Results were analyzed from the questionnaires that were send to the random number of people who played video games are reported in the research study. Using data analysis significant differences were found between participants who had and had not played video games, reported improvement of several interpersonal skills or abilities such as giving directions to others, leading a group of people, coordinating the activities of other people, and ability to memorize information, problem solving etc. The results show that playing video game does have positive consequences in life as well as have a direct link with the success in life.

Key Words: Video gaming genre, Video gamers, Inter-personal Skills, Success in Life

BACKGROUND

Some of the persuasive proponents for the use of video games for educational purposes include Prensky (2001; 2003), Gee (2007), Shaffer, Squire, Halverson, and Gee (2004) and Squire (2003). A selective review of the research literature does show that playing video games has positive effects on game players. A study by Jansz and Martens (2005) found that one of the reasons for playing online video games is the social contact with other players. Griffiths et al. (2011), who reviewed studies of gamers who played "massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs)," noted that social interaction is an essential ingredient among those who play such games. Kong and Theodore (2011) studied gamers who played "fighting games" and concluded, "For community members who meet offline regularly, online communication serves as a useful tool for organizing and sharing information, and strengthens social connections." This indicates that game players are not always individuals who are isolated from each other without any contact with other gamers. They do form friendships with other gamers and develop a sense of community.

The use of video games helps students be more engaged (Annetta, Minogue, Holmes, & Cheng, 2009). An experimental study conducted by Din and Calao (2001) showed that kindergartners in the experimental group performed significantly better on the posttest in the areas of spelling and decoding. Positive aspects of playing video games reported by others include improved classroom discipline (Lee, Luchini, Michael, Norris, & Soloway, 2004), social interaction (Lee, et al., 2004; Lenhart et al., 2008), the development of pro-social behavior (Greitemeyer and Osswald, 2010), and improved civic engagement (Lenhart et al., 2008). Furthermore, a study conducted by Nardi and Harris (2006) showed that video games players collaborated with each other in different ways. Playing action video games has been shown to increase attention skills (Dye & Bavelier, 2010; Dye, Green, & Bavelier). Finally, cooperation and coordination are other skills that video games help players to develop (Ducheneaut and Moore, 2005).

A previous study has also shown that participants did report acquiring various educational, personal, social, and work-related skills, "such as communication skills, coordination skills, leadership skills and other social skills" as a result of playing video games (Thirunarayanan et al., 2010).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is performed to determine that how video games impact the new generation and in which way it helps the generation to get success in life. For the research I have used a qualitative method in which I have designed a questionnaire and sent those questionnaires to the random number of people, whom I know, who are mostly like above 18 and most of them were university graduate or college graduate, to collect related information on each of the identical questions that I have asked. These questionnaires were sent to them through email and some of the questions were also asked through phone. Questionnaire includes demographic data (such as age, location, gender), video gaming types or genres depending upon the personal preference, development of inter-personal skills through video gaming and also the success in life.

Questionnaire include a series of statements that includes some basic demographic information that was collected from all participants, including age, gender, their current highest level of education and location. I also asked from the participants about the type of video games they play or any specific video game genres they like according to their own preference. In addition, I asked from participants to estimate the time they spend in playing video games on the basis of daily, weekly or monthly time estimation.

Similarly, I asked them about the inter-personal skills they have developed after playing online video games and the effect of these skills on their daily lives whether these games are educational or not. In the last I also inquired about their success in life that whether these inter-personal skills playing any role in their success and if yes what is the extent.

I started gathering data from the first week of June and participants were recruited to the study by means of an email invitation that I have sent to them with a link to an online form. The email was targeted to the participants who are mostly working as well as studying for higher education and also involve in playing video games.

Also, I have made phone calls to some of them who didn't responded me back in order to have a telephonic interview to collect data. I received the filled questionnaires at the third week of June then I started extracted relevant data for the analysis to draw the main results from it. I have done the data analysis.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Questionnaire comprises of 18 questions and all are open-ended questions. I sent those questionnaires to the random number of people through email and were answered by 40 participants. Less than 5% of participants refused to participate in the study.

Basic demographic information was collected for all participants, including age, gender and highest level of education. About 47% and 53% of the participants were 19-21 and 22-25 years old, respectively. The sample was 35% female and 65% male. 45% of the participants were having bachelor's degree, 35% were having college degree and 20% were having high school diplomas. More than 93% of participants who participated in this study reported that they have played video games. Both girls and boys spent an average of 10 to 12 hours per week playing video gaming, respectively. Three genres of games seem to be more popular than other genres that is 57% of participants reported that they had played action games while 18% participants played adventure games and 15% participants played sport games. Table 1.

Table 1. Showing demographic information and video gaming characteristics

Characteristics	Male	Female
Age 19-21 22-25	65% 53%	47% 35%
Highest level of education Bachelors College degrees High School diploma	35% 25% 15%	10% 10% 5%
Game genres Action Adventure Sports	50% 15% 14%	7% 3% 1%
Weekly hours playing video games	8-9 hours	2-3 hours

I also asked them about the reasons of playing these games, 47% participants said that it relaxes their mind, 35% participants said that they play these games anytime when they are feeling bored and 18% said that they got a great feeling when they master or finish the game. About 95% participants play these games on their computers and on a daily basis.

I asked these participants to enumerate that how by playing video games help them to improve their inter-personal skills like communication skills, team working, leadership skills, ability to memorize the information, problem solving and decision making. Most of the participants replied that video games do improve the above-mentioned skills a lot and it help them in their lives in every way.

According to participants response following skills were developed by playing video games.

Those who played video games reported that their ability to memorize information had improved. The data in Table 2 show that participants reported improvements in their ability to memorize information.

Table 2. Improved the ability of memorizing information according to the participants response

Improve the Ability to Memorize Information	Agree with the statement	Disagree with the statement
	82.3%	65.0%

As the data in Table 3 show, playing video games did not improve the decision-making skills of the participants in their daily lives. To the contrary, larger proportions of those who did not play video games reported that their decision-making skills in their daily lives had improved.

Table 3. Did not improve the decision-making skills according to the participants response

Improved decision-making skills	Agree with the statement	Disagree with the statement
	29.2%	50%

A significantly larger proportion of those who played video game agreed that it helped them improved their ability to communicate verbally. Data in Table 4 shows that larger proportions of those who had played video games their communication skills got much better than they had before.

Table 4. Improved verbal communication skills according to the participants response

Improved verbal communication skills	Agree with the statement	Disagree with the statement
	65.2%	34.8%

Compared to those who had no video game playing experience, a significantly larger proportion of those who had played video games agreed that their ability to lead a group of people had improved. These data are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Improved the ability of leading group of people according to the participants response

Improved the ability of leading a group of people	Agree with the statement	Disagree with the statement
	63.4%	21.8%

The data in Table 6 show that those who had played video games got improved in terms of their abilities to give directions to others. A much larger proportion of those who had played video games reported improvement in their ability to give directions to others as opposed to those who have not played video games.

Table 6. Improved in their ability to give directions to others according to the participants response

Improved in the ability to give direction to others	Agree with the statement	Disagree with the statement
	70.5%	47.8%

I also asked them that by sharpening these skills can help anyone to get a job or advance in a career or success in life. A very large proportion of participants who had played video games agreed with the statement that playing video games had improve their inter-personal skills which directly relates to the success in life or performance at work as shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Success in life relates to inter-personal skills according to the response of participants

Success in life relates to inter-personal skills which are improved through video	Agree with the statement	Disagree with the statement
	82.5%	32.3%

So significant proportions of participants who had played video games reported that they had developed positive skills compared to those who had indicated that they had not played video games. Some of the work-related skills reportedly developed by participants who had played video game were like leading a group of people, giving directions to others etc. Results also showed that the success in life is directly linked with the inter-personal skills improved in participants by playing video games. Those who had playing experience also reported improvements their ability to memorize information which are valuable personal skills that will help them not only in their personal lives but also in their educational careers. As far as decision making skills in their daily lives were concerned, participants reported that it had no positive consequences by playing video games in lives.

Video games share many similarities with traditional games and likely provide benefits similar to those provided by play more generally. Both traditional and video games are fundamentally voluntary in nature, they can include competitive and cooperative objectives. This study demonstrates that playing video games can have a positive effect on inter-personal skills. The findings of this study show participants who are not necessarily hard-core gamers, there were several positive consequences reported and no negative consequences are associated with playing video games. Not many research studies have looked at differences between those who have and have not played video games and the life skills that they did or did not develop. This study fills this gap provide useful information about the positive aspects of playing video game and also help combat negative perceptions about playing video games.

LIMITATIONS

Mostly participants included here all those who played video games. The views of those participants who do not play video games are not mostly taken into the consideration. Other limitations relate to the nature of qualitative approach as the data is gathered through questionnaire and some through telephonic call which affect the responses. In terms of this study, it is possible that participants might have modified their responses to reflect what they perceived as the interviewer's preferred answer.

FUTURE WORK

Future studies of this nature could include qualitative data in the form of focus groups or interviews with participants that is face to face interviews. Such qualitative data will certainly add to the findings of studies. A question that could be addressed in similar future papers is whether certain types or genres of games help players develop certain types of skills. Findings of such studies could be useful in assigning different games to different students of under-grad for the purpose of developing specific skills, such as memorization skills and arithmetic skills that help them in accomplishing life goals or success in life.

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