Violent video games delay the development of moral judgement in teens

5 February 2014

Mirjana Bajovic of Brock University set out to discover whether there was a link between the types of video games teens played, how long they played them, and the teens' levels of moral reasoning: their ability to take the perspective of others into account.

She quizzed a group of eighth-graders (aged 13–14) about their playing habits and patterns, as well as determined their stage of moral reasoning using an established scale of one to four.

Blagovic's results, published in Educational Media International, indicate that there was a significant difference in sociomaturity levels between adolescents who played violent video games for one hour a day and those who played for three or more.

Bajovic suggests that both the content of the games and the time spent playing contribute to the fact that many of the violent gamers achieved only the second stage of sociomoral maturity. Earlier research suggests that adolescents who have not advanced beyond this point "usually have not had enough opportunities to take different roles or consider the perspective of others in real life."

"The present results indicate that some adolescents in the violent video game playing group, who spent three or more hours a day playing violent video games, while assumingly detached from the outside world, are deprived of such opportunities."

"Spending too much time within the virtual world of violence may prevent [gamers] from getting involved in different positive social experiences in real life, and in developing a positive sense of what is right and wrong."

Interestingly, there was no correlation between the amount of time adolescents reported playing non-violent video games and their sociomoral reasoning levels.

Bajovic concedes that "prohibiting adolescents from playing violent video games is not realistic." Instead, parents must be aware of what games their teens are playing and for how long, as well as the "possible effect that those video games may or may not have on their children's attitudes, behaviour and moral development."

Bajovic also recommends that teachers, parents and teens work together to provide the different social opportunities players seem to be lacking. Charity work, community involvement and extracurricular activities all provide gamers with "different perspectives and positive role taking opportunities".

Finally, teachers and parents both need to understand the content and storyline of games, as well as discuss what's "right and wrong within the stories depicted in video games", at home and in the classroom. As difficult as those discussions might be, most teens would probably prefer that approach to their parents pulling the plug.

  More information: 'Violent video gaming and moral reasoning in adolescents: is there an association?' Mirjana Bajovic, in *Educational Media International*, Volume 50, Issue 3, 2013, pages 177-191, 10.1080/09523987.2013.836367

Provided by Taylor & Francis

APA citation: Violent video games delay the development of moral judgement in teens (2014, February 5) retrieved 11 July 2022 from https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-02-violent-video-games-moral-judgement.html