Gaming for Good: Exploring the Positive Effects on Children's Mental Health

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of indoor and outdoor games on children's mental health, aiming to discern the advantages and disadvantages associated with different gaming environments. Furthermore, it investigates children's gaming behaviour to gain insights into their attitudes, preferences, and habits related to gaming activities. Finally, the research explores various factors affecting children's mental well-being in the context of gaming. Conducted in Ahmedabad, the study involves a sample size of 160 children. By analysing these three key objectives, this research provides a comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationship between gaming and children's mental health. These findings offer valuable guidance for parents, educators, and policymakers in promoting a balanced and positive gaming environment for children in the digital era.

KEYWORDS: Games, Mental Health, Mental Well-Being.

1.   INTRODUCTION

Games have a significant role in promoting both physical and mental well-being, fostering attributes like as confidence, discipline, and tolerance, while also instilling enthusiasm. However, it is worth noting that certain violent video games have been associated with an escalation in aggressive conduct. During ancient times, gymnastics constituted the sole means of engaging in physical activity. The experience was characterised by a lack of stimulation and a repetitive nature. Throughout history, individuals have sought to get psychological satisfaction from engaging in physical activities, leading to the development of several outdoor and indoor sports across time.

The historical origins of sports and games can be traced back to the earliest existence of human beings, who have demonstrated a natural inclination towards purposeful, recreational, and physically active pursuits. Sports have proven to be a valuable means for individuals to enhance their understanding and control over the natural world and their surroundings. The study of sports history offers valuable insights into the dynamics of social transformation and the inherent characteristics of athletic endeavours. Sports encompass the fundamental human abilities that are honed and applied for their practical value. Additionally, it aids in comprehending the manner in which societal views have evolved, thereby resulting in modifications to established norms and regulations.

In the context of outdoor games, it is imperative to adhere to the prescribed rules in order to cultivate a sense of obedience towards regulations. We acquire the ability to engage in appropriate behaviour with our fellow gamers. Engaging in outdoor games fosters the development of sportsmanship and cultivates a sportsmanlike attitude, enabling individuals to graciously accept the triumph of their opponents. Engaging in outdoor activities facilitates the intake of fresh air and oxygen, hence reducing susceptibility to many life-threatening ailments. Consequently, this diversionary activity effectively alleviates mental stress, concerns, and anxieties.

Games have a significant role in fostering the cognitive and physical development of individuals. It is widely recognised that extended periods of sedentary behaviour, such as prolonged engagement with video games and television, do not confer health benefits. Conversely, engaging in outdoor activities has been found to positively impact the quality of sleep among youngsters. When engaging in outdoor activities, it is imperative that we do not concern ourselves with the potential dirtiness or filthiness our children may acquire. It is advisable to promote and prioritise outdoor play for individuals. The advantages of engaging in outdoor play encompass both cognitive and physical aspects. The advantages of engaging in this activity include enhanced strength endurance and improved coordination. Engaging in outdoor play holds significant significance for infants, young children, and preschool-aged individuals across multiple dimensions. It facilitates their growth and advancement. Infants, young children, and preschool-aged individuals exhibit a propensity for learning through sensory experiences. In addition to its various health benefits, engaging in physical activity also promotes the expansion of children's cognitive abilities and critical thinking skills. As mature individuals, we are cognizant of the fact that our learning process is facilitated by engaging in practical activities. Consequently, it is imperative to recognise that children also acquire knowledge and skills through physical movement. Engaging in outdoor activities has been found to reduce stress levels in children. Children engage in unstructured play as a means to express and navigate the emotional dimensions inherent in their daily encounters. Children who are given the opportunity to engage in unstructured play with their peers acquire valuable abilities related to perspective-taking, cooperation, sharing, and problem-solving.

Engaging in outdoor games contributes to the mitigation of various life-threatening conditions, including respiratory ailments, cardiovascular diseases, strokes, hypertension, non-insulin dependent diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis-related back pain. Additionally, such activities have the potential to enhance one's emotional state, facilitate stress management, and safeguard against psychological disorders. It serves as a deterrent against engaging in smoking and other detrimental addictive behaviours that have negative impacts on one's health. Engaging in this activity serves as a distraction from various sources of stress, challenges, and concerns.

Outdoor activities provide valuable opportunities for individuals to develop a diverse range of skills that may be applied throughout their lives, enabling them to effectively navigate various situations. Confidence is a valuable attribute that is consistently absent in individuals and is consistently required by individuals in various circumstances. The utilisation of this tool improves our cognitive processes related to decision making. The act of manipulating the decision enhances our cognitive acuity. The acquisition of obedience to norms and regulations imparts discipline to individuals. Tolerance is an additional feature that it provides us with. The experience of being defeated by an opposing team can foster the development of tolerance towards the winning side. Furthermore, it imparts valuable lessons about sportsmanship, desire, and motivation. Experiencing defeat can ignite within us a renewed sense of determination and a clear objective to achieve victory in subsequent endeavours.

2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have highlighted the potential cognitive benefits of gaming for children. For instance, Smith et al. (2018) found that educational video games can improve children's problem-solving abilities and spatial reasoning. Additionally, Brown and Carter (2019) conducted research on action video games and reported enhanced attentional control and visual processing skills in children.

Research by Williams et al. (2017) suggests that multiplayer online games can promote social interaction and teamwork among children. These experiences can contribute to the development of strong interpersonal skills and empathy. Furthermore, studies like Johnson and Patel (2018) have emphasized the potential of narrative-driven video games in fostering emotional intelligence in children.

While there are benefits to gaming, authors such as Robinson (2020) have emphasized the importance of moderation and age-appropriate content. Excessive screen time and exposure to violent or mature content have been linked to negative outcomes. Hence, parental guidance and monitoring are crucial factors in ensuring a positive gaming experience for children.

Some researchers, including Lee and Garcia (2019), have investigated how video games can serve as coping mechanisms for children facing mental health challenges. Their findings suggest that certain games can provide a safe outlet for stress relief and emotional expression.

Despite the potential benefits, concerns about the impact of excessive gaming on mental health persist. Studies by Smith and Davis (2017) have identified associations between excessive gaming and increased risk of depression and social isolation among children. It is crucial to continue monitoring these risks and consider individual variations.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE
1. To understand the advantages and disadvantages of the indoor and outdoor games.
2. To study the behaviour of the kids towards games
3. To study the factors affecting mental health

SAMPLE SIZE

The research was conducted in Ahmedabad and 160 kids has been covered for this study.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

1.   Gender of the Children

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	%
Boy	83	52%
Girl	77	48%
TOTAL	**160**	**100%**

From the above table it can be seen that 52% are boys and 48% are gilrs covered in the research study.

2.   Which gadgets do he/she prefers to play game?

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	%
Mobile	110	69%
Laptop	28	17%
Tablet	22	14%
TOTAL	**160**	**100%**

From the above table it can be seen that 69% kids using mobile to play the games, 17% using laptop to play the games while 14% kids using tablet to play the games.

3.   Which types of game do he/she prefers the most?

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	%
Online	55	34%
Offline	105	66%
TOTAL	**160**	**100%**

From the above table it can be seen that 34% of the kids prefer online games where as 66% of the kids prefer offline games

4.   Do you consider himself/herself to be addicted for most frequently played game?

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	%
Yes	72	45%
No	54	34%
May be	34	21%
TOTAL	**160**	**100%**

From the above table it can be seen that 45% of the respondents believe that kids addicted to games if played frequently, 34% of the respondents believe that kids are not addicted to games if played frequently where as 21% of the respondents believe that kids may be addicted to games if played frequently

5.   How many times do he/she spend normally for the playing a game?

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	%
1 Hour	79	49%
2 Hours	43	27%
3 Hours	26	16%
More than 3 Hours	12	8%
TOTAL	160	100%

From the above table it can be seen that 49% of the respondents suggested that kids spend 1Hr to play the game, 27% of the respondents suggested that kids spend 2Hr to play the game, 16% of the respondents suggested that kids spend 3Hr to play the game and 8% of the respondents suggested that kids spend more than 3 Hrs to play the game

6.   Does he/she skip work to finish game?

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	%
Yes	55	34%
No	105	66%
TOTAL	160	100%

From the above table it can be seen that 34% of the respondents believe that kids skip their work to finish game, 66% of the respondents believe that kids don't skip their work to finish game

7.   Do he/she skip lunch to finish game?

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	%
Yes	44	28%
No	116	73%
TOTAL	160	100%

From the above table it can be seen that 28% of the respondents believe kids skip their lunch to finish game whereas 73% of the respondents believe kids don't skip their lunch to finish game

8.   Do you see any kind of frustration or depression when he/she plays the game?

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	%
Yes	50	31%
No	110	69%
TOTAL	160	100%

From the above table it can be seen that 31% of the respondents believe they see frustration or depression when he/she plays the game while 69% of the respondents dont see frustration or depression when he/she plays the game

9.   What sign you see when he/she spends a lot of time playing the games?

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	%
Tiredness	30	19%
Headache	53	33%
Other	77	48%
TOTAL	**160**	**100%**

From the above table it can be seen that 19% of the respondents feel tiredness in kids when they spend much time on playing game, 33% of the respondents feel headache in kids when they spend much time on playing game while 48% of the respondents feel other symptoms in kids when they spend much time on playing game

10.   He/she quitting the game after he/she became addicted to it but found that he/she was unsuccessful

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	%
Agree	69	43%
Disagree	54	34%
Neutral	37	23%
TOTAL	**160**	**100%**

From the above table it can be seen that 43% of the respondents agree with the statement that "He/she quitting the game after he/she became addicted to it but found that he/she was unsuccessful", 34% of the respondents disagree with the statement that "He/she quitting the game after he/she became addicted to it but found that he/she was unsuccessful" while 23% of the respondents neutral with the statement that "He/she quitting the game after he/she became addicted to it but found that he/she was unsuccessful"

11.   He/she feel frustrated if he/she unable to play the game

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	%
Agree	68	42%
Disagree	60	38%
Neutral	32	20%
TOTAL	160	100%

From the above table it can be seen that 42% of the respondents agree with the statement that "He/she feel frustrated if he/she unable to play the game", 38% of the respondents disagree with the statement that "He/she feel frustrated if he/she unable to play the game" while 20% of the respondents neutral with the statement that "He/she feel frustrated if he/she unable to play the game"

12.   He/she have a sense of higher self-esteem when playing the game

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	%
Agree	57	36%
Disagree	44	27%
Neutral	59	37%
TOTAL	160	100%

From the above table it can be seen that 36% of the respondents agree with the statement that "He/she have a sense of higher self-esteem when playing the game", 27% of the respondents disagree with the statement that "He/she have a sense of higher self-esteem when playing the game" while 37% of the respondents neutral with the statement that "He/she have a sense of higher self-esteem when playing the game"

13.   Playing the game causes his/her to have real life problems

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	%
Agree	72	45%
Disagree	49	31%
Neutral	39	24%
TOTAL	160	100%

From the above table it can be seen that 45% of the respondents agree with the statement that "Playing the game causes his/her to have real life problems", 31% of the respondents disagree with the statement that "Playing the game causes his/her to have real life problems" while 24% of the respondents neutral with the statement that "Playing the game causes his/her to have real life problems"

14.   It would be easy for his/her become addicted to game after playing them

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	%
Agree	41	26%
Disagree	27	17%
Neutral	92	58%
TOTAL	**160**	**100%**

From the above table it can be seen that 45% of the respondents agree with the statement that "Playing the game causes his/her to have real life problems", 31% of the respondents disagree with the statement that "Playing the game causes his/her to have real life problems" while 24% of the respondents neutral with the statement that "Playing the game causes his/her to have real life problems"

5.   CONCLUSION

The exploration of the positive effects of gaming on children's mental health has revealed a multifaceted relationship that extends beyond mere entertainment. As discussed in this review, recent studies have shed light on several noteworthy aspects of this relationship.

Firstly, educational video games have emerged as valuable tools for enhancing cognitive skills among children. These games have demonstrated the potential to improve problem-solving abilities and spatial reasoning, underlining their role in cognitive development. Additionally, action video games have been associated with heightened attentional control and visual processing skills, further highlighting the cognitive benefits that certain games can offer.

Socially and emotionally, gaming has shown promise in fostering positive outcomes. Multiplayer online games have been found to encourage social interaction, teamwork, and the development of essential interpersonal skills. Likewise, narrative-driven video games have been shown to contribute to emotional intelligence in children, potentially helping them better understand and manage their emotions.

However, it's crucial to emphasize the importance of moderation and context in the gaming experience. Excessive screen time and exposure to violent or inappropriate content have been linked to adverse mental health outcomes. Therefore, parental guidance and monitoring remain essential in ensuring that children's gaming experiences are positive and safe.

Moreover, gaming has been identified as a potential coping mechanism for children facing mental health challenges. Some studies have suggested that video games can provide a safe outlet for stress relief and emotional expression. This aspect of gaming should not be overlooked, as it may offer a constructive avenue for addressing emotional well-being in children.

Nonetheless, it is essential to remain vigilant about potential risks associated with excessive gaming, including an increased risk of depression and social isolation. While the positive effects of gaming are evident, the key lies in striking a balance between gaming and other activities, as well as ensuring that children have access to age-appropriate content.

In conclusion, the research on the positive effects of gaming on children's mental health, conducted after 2016, paints a complex picture. Video games have the potential to contribute positively to cognitive, social, and emotional development in children. However, responsible gaming practices, parental involvement, and a keen awareness of potential risks are crucial in harnessing the benefits while mitigating the drawbacks. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, ongoing research in this field remains essential to provide a nuanced understanding of how gaming can be leveraged for the well-being of our younger generations.

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