

BENEFITS OF A PASTIME: AN EVALUATIVE ESSAY

A CASE STUDY OF PLAYING VIDEO GAMES AS A HOBBY

INTRODUCTION

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Every human, whether spiritual or non-spiritual, extroverted or introverted, intellectual or non-intellectual, wealthy or not, will always yearn to have something or an activity to do as a pastime. No matter how hardworking a person might be, there will always come a time when he or she feels like unwinding in order to ease off the stress long accumulated in the overall mental and physical system of such person's body. And the only way, apart from sex, to release stress, boredom or depression from one's life is to actively participate in a physical activity that can also serve as a form of entertainment. This is also known as the word hobby. Hobby comes in many forms depending on the person's preferences and his or her beliefs on what can easily give that needed pleasure and way out of daily stress. Though there are so many forms of hobbies being indulged in by everyone as human societies rapidly become a digital global village, but some have actually gained huge popularity and favor over the years. And one of the foremost and most addictive out of these popular, modern hobbies is the playing of video games. During the course of time and the advancement in the media entertainment technology, video games have really come a long way in providing visual and physical entertainment for all ages whether as adults or kids. Thus the main aim of this essay is to examine the benefits of this particular hobby that shall be highlighted herein in this discourse.

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THESIS STATEMENT

Unlike most hobbies out there, video games are simply the digital adventures of the life we fantasize without seeing or having to live those lives with the sure rigors of reality. In other

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words, video games are kinds of the projection of the future, present or the past through a virtual representation. Also, playing video games as a hobby improves cognitive response to perceiving things better i.e. imagination, and another amazing thing this hobby does is to create a sense of happiness through involving yourself digitally in undertaking tasks in a world you would envision to find yourself. These benefits are pleasure triggers to an average game player's brain which in turn help relief stress, boredom, pain or depression.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A virtual reality is an artificial world that consists of images and sounds created by a computer and which is affected by the actions of a person who is experiencing it. It is simply an artificial environment which is experienced through sensory stimuli (as sights and sounds) provided by a computer and in which one's actions partially determine what happens in the environment (Merriam-Webster English Dictionary © 2019).

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A video game is enjoyed on a screen, usually on a television through a machine known as consoles and game pads or controllers that the player will use in controlling the animated figures on the screen. Video games can also be played on a computer system and viewed through the system's monitor.

Now concerning the aid of video games in improving brain response to perceiving things in a better way, research site, www.nature.com (2013), in its article titled Molecular Psychiatry 19, 265–271, stated that video gaming is a highly pervasive activity that really provides a multitude of complex cognitive and motor demands. Gaming can be seen as an intense training of several skills. The research made an experiment comparing a control with a video gaming training group that was trained for 2 months for at least 30 min per day with a platformer game, we found significant gray matter (GM) increase in right hippocampal

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formation (HC), right dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC) and bilateral cerebellum in the training group.

The above research analysis suggests that the brain activities increase when indulging in this hobby. It is suffice to say this is evidently found in gamers who are mostly into playing role playing adventure games also known as RPGS, strategy games and puzzle games. These categories of games will always task the players due to the nature of their gameplay, battle tactics and puzzle solving tasks embedded in the story progression used in the gameplay mechanisms. There have been many instances of players getting stuck at a particular stage or level for weeks, months and even a couple of years depending on the time the player uses on trying to get past difficult stages. This case is an exemplary idea on how well a particular video game can cognitively task a person to think outside the box on solving the problem of getting past an incredibly powerful enemy boss or the runes to unlocking an important artefact integral to the progress of the game's storyline. **Do not copy**

In another point on the beneficial effects of video games on a person concerning imagination, Green & Bavelier (2003) made some findings that expert video game players often outperform non-players on measures of basic attention and performance. Recent research has suggested a causal relationship between playing action video games and improvements in a variety of visual and attentional skills.

Humans are generally attracted easily to something they could see, and the bonus for that thing to be able to gain undivided attention is to really be easy on the eyes. And to be sincere, it is justifiable to say that virtual reality technology in modern videogames has effortlessly given this great power of undivided attention to game players all over the world. Video games have really come a long way in terms of technological advancement and we are now in the age where games are presented or rendered in high definition graphics that are

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dangerously closer to real life vista, 4k/5k high definition video resolutions and intimidating digital sound surround systems to bring out the game's stunning virtual world projected on the imagination of whomever is playing. More so this will further enhance the motivation of working on what a person sees and be part of that world through his or her eyes, hands and the console or system projecting. An example can be drawn from the positively received virtual video game movie titled Ready Player One directed by Steven Spielberg in 2018.

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Another benefits of playing video games as a hobby is the inherent pain and stress reliever they give to the body. Though the relief from pain in question could be more of mental rather physical in most cases for players. The stress factor is very important here due to the attention an avid player is sure to give to the screen projecting whatever tournament or mission he or she is playing and which will eventually ease off whatever stress the player might be going through. The same stress relief effect can also be found in the watching of movies or video entertainment but all these can not compare to the engaging fun of holding a controller in your hands to shoot out some bad guys or trick an enemy boss using your intuition. This is because the pleasure that comes in completing a dangerous or difficult mission, or an exceedingly difficult puzzle will definitely create a smile and form an euphoria of happiness that will make the player to forget the stress troubling him or her without having to resort to using drugs.

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CONCLUSION

Contrary to some misguided beliefs, video games can never dull the mind. In fact it sharpens it. The video game business is now a multibillion dollar industry and it is no longer just a hobby for entertainment seekers but lots of financial profits for those creative in animation designs, script writing or stories, voice over acting, history etc.

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The myth of video games being a dangerous hobby is stemmed out of the alarm caused by many people, especially teenagers or kids for their addiction to sitting in front of a screen playing games all day long without doing anything. Well addiction is one of the psychological flaws of the human body system and it is being displayed in all other forms of hobbies or favored activities. There is addiction problem in taking alcohol, going to the gym, smoking cigarettes, eating some particular types of food, sex etc. So playing video games does not have a special kind of addiction different from the activities mentioned above, everything still comes down to applying moderation to all things. In fact playing video games is even more beneficial healthwise than many hobbies out there due to its cognitive impacts on the human brain and psyche.

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