

Exploring The Possible Mental Health and Wellbeing Benefits of Video Games for Adult Players

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Introduction

Due to the increasing popularity of video gaming as a past time, researchers have sought out the psychological and physical effects of gaming. Many current video game studies seem to conflict with one another, with there being both positive and negative effects on psychological and physical health. This poster will analyze a research paper that explores the possible positive or negative effects that video gaming has on player wellbeing and psychological health and identify any correlations between player demographics and game genre.

Methods

Sampling: Participants were 18 years or older and were reached via invitations on twitter and Facebook groups.

Survey Design: The method of data collection this research paper used was an anonymous cross-sectional survey that was hosted on google forms. 177 variables were analyzed including player demographics, video game genres that participants played and the amount of time they played them, who they played with and whether the participant perceived psychological effects from the video games.

Analysis: The researchers used multiple methods of analysis including:

- The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (Tennant, Hiller, Fishwick, et al, 2007) and Flourishing Scale (Diener, Wirtz, Tov, et al, 2010) was used to assess psychological, emotional and social wellbeing.
- The Basic Psychological Needs Scale (Chen, Vansteenkiste, Beyers, et al, 2015) assessed relatedness, competence, and autonomy.
- The Flow Short Scale (Jackson, Martin, Eklund, 2008) was used to assess flow.

Genre	Key Findings	Significance
RPG (Role-playing games)	Female participants (73.8%) more likely than male (68.3%) and gender diverse (80.5%) to believe RPGs have psychological benefits	$\chi^2 = 10.09, p < .001$
Survival Horror	Male (35.2%) and gender diverse (37.8%) participants more likely than females participants (28.5%) to play survival horror games	$\chi^2 = 8.66, p < .05$
	Male (34.8%) and gender diverse (40.2%) participants were significantly more likely than females (28.9%) to believe survival horror games have psychological benefits	$\chi^2 = 8.13, p < .05$
Music Games	Outcomes were the same for male, female and other genders	NA
MOBA (Multiplayer Online Battle Arena)	Male participants (27.9%) were significantly more likely than females (16.2%) and other genders (22.0%) to play MOBAs	$\chi^2 = 30.19, p < .0001$
	Male (24.2%) and gender diverse (28.0%) participants were more likely than females (18.0%) to believe that MOBAs have psychological benefits	$\chi^2 = 10.48, p < .01$

Table: Subgroup analysis of genre impact by demographic

References

Hazel J, Kim HM, Every-Palmer S. Exploring the possible mental health and wellbeing benefits of video games for adult players: A cross-sectional study. *Australasian Psychiatry*. 2022;30(4):541-546. doi:10.1177/10398562221103081

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Results

Demographics: There were 2107 valid survey responses with 69.5% of the responses identifying as male, 26.4% as female, 3.9% gender diverse, and 0.2% were missing. 81.8% of participants were 18-34 years old, 13.5% were 35-44 years old, and 3.4% were over 45 years old. 31% of participants were in Australia, 29.5% were in USA, and 25.4% in the UK (Hazel, Kim, Every-Palmer, 2022).

Psychological Impact: 88.4% of participants believed that video gaming positively impacted their psychological and emotional health; 9% were unsure and 2.4% did not perceive any benefits. Participants who perceived video gaming had benefits had higher psychological outcome scores and scored higher in relatedness, competence, autonomy, and flow state. “Increasing age was negatively correlated with psychological benefits” (Hazel, Kim, Every-Palmer, 2022). Researchers found that there were significant correlations between video game genres and psychological outcome variables. Video game genre and gender were determining factors of perceived psychological benefits. Video game genres that participants perceived had the most psychological benefits included role-playing games, music games, and survival horror games.

Conclusion & Discussion

Strengths and Limitations: One limitation of this study was the fact that the data collected was subjective, so the correlations found between demographics, game genre, and psychological wellbeing cannot prove causation. Another limitation of the study is that participants were recruited by selection bias. A strength of this study was the 2000+ participants.

Key Findings:

- All genders believed that video games allowed for psychological benefits.
- Perceived benefits depended on age; younger participants perceived more benefits.
- Those who played multiplayer games scored higher on relatedness and wellbeing measures than those who played single-player games.
- Participants believed RPGs had the most psychological benefits.
- Participants scored MOBA games lower on the wellbeing measure.

Conclusion: This research study is very important, especially since video games are increasingly becoming more popular. This information could be useful to future game developers that may want to try to improve overall gaming experience, or perhaps developers can focus on maximizing positive experiences within a current game. This information can also be useful to gamers who may be concerned about their psychological and emotional health who then can avoid certain game genres.