

## **What are the myths about violent video games vs the facts?**

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## **What are the myths about violent video games causing the youth to be violent vs the facts psychologists have found?**

On December 10th, 1993, a game called *Doom* was released on PC and was received well in the gaming community at the time due to its violent nature and gory visuals. Without a doubt, the game was immediately criticized by many groups of people, mainly politicians, preachers, and news reporters, about how the game's violent nature affected the youths' minds. This was only the beginning of video games being criticized for being "too violent" and "ruining children's minds" because of the graphic nature of the game. Another example is *GTA IV*, another violent video game which has you play as a person who comes to New York City and gets involved in the criminal world, which was criticized by news anchors because it taught kids that killing people is fun and is ok, which was completely taken out of context from what the game is about. Although video games can be very violent and show imagery younger kids should not see at their age, the violence in video games does not teach kids to hurt others which is the media's main argument and the media over exaggerates their claims by either taking the word "violence" out of context or making claims that they have no knowledge about. It is also important to note that the video game industry does not promote these types of games to young kids, but rather to those 17 years or older, so it can be assumed that it can be the parent's fault for letting younger kids play these types of games. This is what the media does not really mention either, which makes their claims biased; it is also important to note that there is no hard evidence to prove that videogames are a direct link to violence. Violent video games, however, can have an indirect effect on young people's minds just like any other violent media like movies, TV shows, and music.

The idea that violent video games cause violent behavior has been used by big media groups to attack the video game industry. However, this idea has been proven wrong by studies

and tests and showed that video games have little to no physiological effect on a young person's mind. In a report done in 2019 by a group of researchers, they had 275 male undergraduates play first-person shooter games and non-violent games. In the end, the researchers, Joseph Hillgard et al. (2019), said, "After completing the game-play session, participants were provoked by a confederate and given an opportunity to behave aggressively...Neither game violence nor game difficulty resulted in aggressive behavior." This is just one of many studies that are done by researchers that prove that violent video games don't have an impact on a young person's mind. From personal experience, I have never once felt the urge to go out of my way and hurt somebody just because I did so in a video game if anything it stops it.

When it comes to the companies that produce these violent video games, many people say that the company supports these ideas and supports kids' violent behavior, however it is against companies' policies to support violent acts in real life through media entertainment. Video companies must follow the same laws as any other company in visuals and messages. When it comes to violent games, they fall under the protection of the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment which, in simple terms, means they have the right to say, show, and do whatever they want since it is considered freedom of speech if it follows publishing guidelines (Justia, 2020). Companies that publish video games commercially have to go through Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) which is an American company that ensures video games follow their guidelines and are appropriate for the public and commercial use, it even says in their about us section that "Our Advertising Review Council actively enforces industry-adopted advertising guidelines, and our Privacy Certified program helps ensure responsible web and mobile privacy practice" (Vance, 2021), Europe has a similar company called PEGI, short for Pan-European Game Information. With this said, video game companies that produce violent games simply do

not want to support violent behavior and if they even wanted to, they cannot be given the guidelines they have to follow.

Another big misconception about violent video games is that every video game produced is violent and anything in the game that is remotely "violent" is taken completely out of context. Although modern video games can contain violent features, many of their features are small violent actions which are over-exaggerated by media companies and are used against video game communities. A noticeable thing about critics that talk bad about video games is that they always mention how video games are to blame for big events like shootings and fights rather than going into what else might have caused it. Many media stations do the "blame game" and blame any violent crime done by a young person on video games, in a report done by Alex Orlando (2023) called "Do Video Games Cause Violence?" he mentions how *Doom*, like mentioned before, is a good example of the blame game by saying, "panic around video game violence spiked again in 1999, when the game *Doom*, which essentially pioneered the first-person shooter genre, was blamed for the Columbine high school massacre" He backs up his claim by saying, "despite more than 20 years of investigation, researchers have failed to prove a causal link between playing violent video games and committing acts of violence." (Orlando, 2023)

People are quick to blame video games for young people's bad behavior and blame the companies for making them accessible to their kids. Like before, the companies that make these games are not solely responsible for these behaviors; rather, it is the adults' fault for not monitoring what their kids see. Now of course it is not the parent's fault if they do not monitor their kids, they could be busy, not know how to monitor them, or simply do not have the resources to. However, a progress report in 2021, done by Vice President of ESRB Patricia E, it says, "60% of parents say they are familiar with monitoring features in the games their kids play," With this information, it tells us that more than half of parents do have knowledge with

monitoring their kids but another report shows that “only a quarter of parents actually do something if something happens” (Andreas, 2021). Personally, my parents tend to only care about what I am playing if I am loud or are trying to make small talk during dinner, other than that they do not care or know what games I have been playing. I remember asking my friend, who plays violent video games, what they felt before and after playing these types of games and he said, “I didn’t feel any different before I played the game than I did after, in fact, I felt more relaxed.” From my personal experience and progress reports, parents have cared about what kids play for video games which can lead to their bad behavior rather than video games being the main problem.

When it comes to young peoples’ misbehavior, video games are primarily pinpointed as the main source of bad behavior. This is biased however, because other types of media such as movies, TV shows, books, and music can be just as violent as video games, but they do not get any criticism. During a podcast by Nico Perrino and Prof. Patrick Markey (2020), they talk about how the “war on video games” should end due to how much bias there is. For example, they mention how other types of media are also responsible for immoral behavior, Nico asks Patrick, “here’s some sort of elevated aggression after playing video games. Could that be said about anything that gets the blood pressure going, movies, playing sports?” Patrick responds with, “Certainly. Yeah.” and backs up his answer by saying, “The rub is obviously if you just saw a sad movie and I asked you after you saw the sad movie do you feel sad, you’d say, “Yeah, I feel sad.” But it does not mean it causes clinical depression. But the problem was we were taking that research done on video games and saying, “Aha, this probably shows that it makes children angry in the long run.” And even when we tried to look at other measures of aggression besides just self-report, we would use these proxy measures of aggression because it is hard to measure actual aggression in a laboratory.” (Perrino & Markey, 2020). This statement shows that video

games are not the only thing that can cause immoral behavior in children but also in all types of media.

In the end, video games get a bad reputation due to media reporters often over-exaggerate and take thing out of context when they are talking about when it comes to video games, parents don't monitor what their kids are playing, video game companies don't support violent behavior in children, if a child develops violent behavior it is not from video games alone but also from other types of media, and there is little to no effects from playing violent video games. While working on this paper I have realized the many aspects and views people have on video games. As a young person myself living in an age where video games are a part of everyone's life, I think we should embrace them and try to learn from them rather than trying to fight against them. Just like how *Doom* was criticized for being too violent, it opened a whole new genre of media which would evolve into something bigger, with this said, turn something negative into a positive.

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