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Video Game Addiction

In today's modern and technological society, gaming has become a normal activity in everyday life for many of us. Gaming is now a worldwide phenomenon and can be accessed in the most remote places around the globe. However, gaming can be a sheep in wolf's clothing, because gaming can become an addiction to which can alter a perfectly normal human to psychologically be unstable, give up all responsibilities and lose sight of family concerns, jeopardize finances and endanger their own health to a point that can cause death. This gamer addiction is a rapidly growing issue in the world today, especially Asia, the U.S. and Europe. First will be a discussion about the psychological issues that a game holds on its players. Next is the social responsibility that is required to partake in an activity that can have a serious strain on the social lives of the people and families. After that, the physical strain that can lead to unhealthy habits and even loss of life will be examined along with the advocacy of self-awareness. Lastly, the opinions of other students will be compared and contrasted with the main theme of gaming addiction.

The U.S. and Japan will be focused on due to the incredible amount of consumerism in video games compared to other countries. About \$14 billion is spent in the American video game market while Japan is about half that at \$7 billion. At the same time 65% of all Americans play videogames while the Japanese play considerably less than westerners (undefined 2013). This

shows a path in where the major issues in video game addiction are being focused and unfortunately it looks like the U.S. is now a top candidate. With such a large number of people playing video games, it is no wonder that some people will start to become addicted to them. The U.S. is seeing a high psychological addiction just the same as extreme sports gives a rush of dopamine to athletes.

The addictive power of video gaming has been looked at by many different reliable authorities. Some experts say that gaming fulfills an intrinsic motivational need. This is supported by a hypothesis of the brain producing dopamine. As players game the act of getting a new object in the game or some sort of feeling of invincibility produces some dopamine which is released and activates your mood, sleep habits and rewarding feelings. If the rewards in the game are unexpected, more dopamine is produced and the effects are similar to someone taking narcotics (Rigby 2011, p.105). The body becomes more and more dependent on having that doped up feeling and Gaming is a non-substance and legal way to get their fix.

This psychology is the same for Japanese as well but again, there are starting to be a larger portion of Japanese that do not want to play games altogether. As for the dopamine hypothesis, it is not the only factor involved in addiction. Social psychology is something that takes part also. Some people are convinced that video games are good for you and good for democracy (Ruvinsky 2011). There are the stereotyped online gamers that interact with thousands of other real players in their online worlds that think, very much, this way. Socially they have not learned how to cope with or interact at a society's norm. This can be viewed by people as the nerds and lonely gamers that make up such a large part of the gaming world. But, because of so many gamers it has, in a good sense, helped show that online gaming communities provide a path to social capital (Ruvinsky 2011). This does not mean that you should go out and

start gaming to help the economy, it just shows how money can and the wrong information can lead people to do something without knowing what they are getting to. Maybe it is a lack of knowledge and the increase of dopamine that triggers an acute addiction but social responsibility is another factor towards behaving in manner that is similar to a crack addict.

Responsibility is something learned as you grow up and if you haven't learned any, than how responsible can you be about an addictive situation? One of the main issues is that many gamers are not responsible enough to manage their time spent playing. Because of this gamers can fall short of their duties at work, school and with their families. From personal experience, the cost of not turning off the game and continuing to play till wee hours in the morning, drops a letter grade at school every time. It could be any school and that is just one consequence out of many. Many similarities of gamer addiction can be compared to gambling addiction. Japan has a large pachinko gambling addiction which could fall under gaming also. But the gambling addictions in both countries have services set in place to help people and advocate the issues to the public. Today, there are few, if not, no services that are readily available to an addicted gamer. Many of the programs that are suggested still use a foundation which is the same as an alcohol, gambling, sex addiction therapy. They all handle the symptoms and help solve the immediate crises but there is really nothing put in place to help the prevention of gamer addiction specifically (Van Rooij 2010). Without knowledge of responsibility, the addiction can turn to more than a social faux pa; it can cause serious health problems along with physical and verbal abuse.

There is an incredible amount of strain put on an addicted gamer's body. There are many reports of gamers not sleeping for days and not eating or drinking as well. With firsthand experience the sleep deprivation is a problem waiting to happen. We all know that the human

body can't survive without sleep, mainly the brain. Because of the addiction after days of being awake staring at a computer screen and sitting in one place takes its toll. You begin to experience hallucinations or a type of schizophrenia and without moving your blood begins to pool in your lower extremities. If this happens there is a chance of a blood circulation problem that includes a clot that could cause death. The warning signs are all too real. Some examples are, hours alone in a room, not eating, violent behavior and extremely moody towards those who are family and friends. One similar situation is compared to an alcoholic parent. The family constantly battled the parent even after therapy but his addiction was too extreme. He would threaten his own family with violence or even come to the point of leaving the family entirely just to have the freedom of drinking (Video game addiction 2007). Interestingly enough there are many gamer situations that are exactly the same. Again these situations are the same for both countries with the difference that more happen in the U.S. To help reduce the problems with video game addiction, many professionals speak of the ability to be self-aware.

Self-awareness is important because it is a fundamental behavior that all humans should be doing. People that are self-aware are able to consciously realize their actions as or even before they are doing them. This relates to the gaming world as they can realize what's going on physically but mentally to especially if they are playing a video game. Self-awareness is developed at an early age and not all people are taught how to do this, so later on in life addiction can be a challenge. With gaming regularly it takes a lot of self-awareness to keep you from being absorbed into the game as well as limiting the effects of emotions from gratifying rewards (Clark and Scott 2009). With a stronger advocacy on risks and what type of skills is needed to play online games is the first step of reversing the overall issue of video game addiction. But there are many opinions that people have and here are just a few.

Most of the other students agree that video game addiction is a problem but they do not know to what extent. They believe they are able to see any signs of getting out of hand at an early stage which I agree. If they had any problems now their grades would have definitely suffered. They also believe that there should be more of an effort to advocate the problems with gaming in a whole along with reducing the availability to young children. Violence in video games was mentioned but the overall theme puts violence to the side for a completely different issue that can be discussed later. Most of the students did not have a counter argument against gaming in general but I will leave my own opinion as to what some benefits can be.

Video games can sharpen reaction times, help the brain remember and possibly prevent long term Alzheimer's. Video games can also relieve stress but at the same time can cause a lot too. Overall the psychology, the self-responsibility, Physical health problems that are mainly the important issues of video game addiction for both Japan and the United states are identical. The differences are the culture and how they recognize it. I believe Japan is leading the U.S. in a way to stray from video games and bring back the social aspect of family while the U.S. continues on the path of increasing visual stimuli. Without a better organized advocacy program, in either country, many people will be affected negatively when it comes to a gaming addiction.

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