Student Opinion: Kids don't realize how harmful video games can be to their health

By Margaret Buckler, student contributor, adapted by Newsela staff on 08.16.18

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Is playing video games bad for kids' brains? One student argues that they are. Image: Newsela staff

It's an invasion! Nope, not an alien invasion – a video game invasion. Kids are playing more video games than ever. They spend more time playing video games instead of going outside. They are also spending more time gaming than studying for school.

In fact, a 2011 study by research group NPD claimed that more than 9 out of 10 kids played video games. That number has probably only gone up.

It's not just kids either. According to Medical News Today, more than 150 million people in the United States play video games for at least 3 hours per week. That is more than 1 out of 3 people in the U.S.

Children have growing minds and bodies. The constant need to play video games has several negative, unhealthy effects on children. These effects can include slowing students' education, promoting violence and hurting their physical health.

Fortnite, Roblox and Minecraft are popular online games. Multiple people can play the games together at the same time. In the last 30 days, Fortnite was one of the top things searched for on Google. It was searched for more than U.S. history topics. Searches for the game Roblox were higher than biology searches. Minecraft was searched more than an SAT preparation resource. The SAT is an important test that colleges use to accept students.

It's clear that video games have become a higher priority than educational subjects.

About the Writer:

Margaret Buckler is a middle school student and writer. She is eager to reach new people through writing, and open them up to new topics and opinions.

Link Between Video Games And Mental Health Problems

It is also clear video game addiction is taking place in schools. Computers and tablets are convenient and widely available. It's easy for students to switch from educational sites to computer games. Personally, I see this very often. Video games are all kids want to do these days, at school and at home.

Adults say that too much television or screen time can make your brain lose cells. Believe it or not, this is actually true. Studies from the University of Montreal in Canada discovered that playing "shooter" games can harm the hippocampus area of the brain, killing brain cells. The hippocampus helps us store memories. Damage to this part of the brain can also increase the chances of certain mental health problems. One example is Alzheimer's disease, which causes memory loss. Another is depression.

Mental illnesses are serious conditions that are different than feeling sad. Feeling sad, lonely or unhappy sometimes is normal and is usually related to what is happening in your life. Mental illness, on the other hand, refers to disorders that affect someone's mood, thoughts and behavior.

Most mental illnesses can be treated by doctors. However, asking for help can be hard for some people. Many people who suffer feel ashamed. A mental health issue like depression can be harder to talk about than a physical health problem like a broken bone.

That said, all of these health concerns could make it harder for a person to get a decent education.

Video Games Promote Violence

Video games aren't just taking time out of education. They can also promote violence. Popular video games, such as Fortnite and Grand Theft Auto, include guns and bad language. Younger children often play these games. According to many studies, violent video games can increase aggressive, violent behavior.

A study asked some participants to play violent games in their lab. Others in the experiment played nonviolent games. Then, the researchers measured the behavior of each group in social experiments afterward. These studies show that playing violent games results in instant changes to behavior. People who played aggressive games became more aggressive. Many people know

aggressive behavior can be caused by many mental health issues, and even physical injuries. However, people do not know that it can also be caused by video game addiction.

Constantly playing video games can also be negative for physical and mental health. It can worsen personal hygiene and cause eye strain. Stressed eyes can lead to migraines. They are intense, painful headaches. Studies show that video game addiction could be linked with depression and abuse of drugs or alcohol. Kids should not face these problems at such young ages.

It's unhealthy for children to stay indoors looking at a screen all day. Instead of going outside and playing sports, kids are sitting inside playing sports on a screen.

Video gaming has become so popular and common. While playing, it can be difficult to realize all the bad effects it has on the brain and body. It's time we take a closer look at these negative effects before mindlessly gaming all day.

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