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## **CHANGING GAME PREFERENCES OF CHILDREN: EFFECTS OF COMPUTER GAMES ON CHILDREN**

***Annotation.** As children's play preferences increasingly gravitate toward computer games, it is essential to examine the multifaceted effects these games have on their development. Computer games offer interactive platforms that enhance cognitive skills such as problem-solving and decision-making. Yet, concerns arise over excessive gaming leading to attention issues and impulsivity. While some games foster social interaction and teamwork, others may expose children to cyberbully and inappropriate content. Emotionally, games can evoke empathy and engagement, but excessive exposure to intense content may desensitize children to real-world violence. Physically, sedentary gaming habits can contribute to health issues like obesity and poor posture. Parental guidance is crucial in regulating screen time, monitoring content, and fostering open communication about gaming habits. By striking a balance between gaming and other activities, parents can help children navigate the digital landscape responsibly while promoting their overall well-being.*

**Key words:** game, children, computer, effects, development.

***Анотація.** Оскільки дитячі ігрові переваги все більше тяжіють до комп'ютерних ігор, важливо вивчити багатогранний вплив цих ігор на їхній розвиток. Комп'ютерні ігри пропонують інтерактивні платформи, які покращують когнітивні навички, такі як вирішення проблем і прийняття рішень. Тим не менш, виникає занепокоєння з приводу надмірних ігор, що*

*приводять до проблем з увагою та імпульсивністю. Хоча деякі ігри сприяють соціальній взаємодії та командній роботі, інші можуть наражати дітей на кіберзалякування та неприйнятний вміст. Емоційно ігри можуть викликати співчуття та залучення, але надмірний вплив інтенсивного вмісту може знизити чутливість дітей до насильства в реальному світі. Фізично сидячі ігрові звички можуть сприяти таким проблемам зі здоров'ям як ожиріння та погана постава. Батьківський нагляд має вирішальне значення для регулювання часу перед екраном, моніторингу контенту та сприяння відкритому спілкуванню про ігрові звички. Дотримуючись балансу між іграми та іншими видами діяльності, батьки можуть допомогти дітям відповідально орієнтуватися в цифровому середовищі, одночасно сприяючи їхньому загальному добробуту.*

**Ключові слова:** *гра, діти, комп'ютер, ефекти, розвиток.*

**Introduction.** In recent years, the landscape of children's play preferences has undergone a significant transformation, with computer games emerging as a dominant form of entertainment. Digital games have entered our lives as a result of the increase in the memory and processing capacities of computers. Children playing with their friends on the street or in the park in the past years, with the rapid progress of technology like mobile phone, computer and tablet, nowadays play digital games with virtual people indoors [7]. Digital games are known to be programmed with various advanced technologies and they are presented to users through various digital techniques and platforms [5]. This article explores the effects of computer games on children, delving into their cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. Use of digital games contributes to children's areas of development [9].

In the past, games played with friends in playgrounds and streets have been replaced by virtual activities carried out on computers and the internet. With the advancement of technology, the frequency of children using computers, the internet and playing computer games has increased [18].

In one study, participants reported their opinions about their own games, their children's games, and their grandchildren's games. As a result of the research; It has been determined that there is a change from outdoor games based on physical activity played with friends to games played indoors with technological products [19]. While Generation X sees play as children's work and a child's need, Generation Y and Z define it as an entertaining activity. Technological games and activities such as housekeeping, computer games and watching television also feature heavily in the games of Generation Z. Children's games are evolving from outdoors to indoors, from natural materials to industrial and artificial materials and computer games, from generations X and Y to Generation Z [10].

**Aim of the study.** Aim of the study is to reveal the effects of computer games on children's developmental domains.

**The relationship between school game children's computer game addiction and behavior problems.** Computer game addiction may be among the secondary or tertiary causes of problem behaviors. Studies show that computer game addiction causes behavioral problems in children such as attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, obsessive and aggressive behavior, aggression, and tendency to violence [3]. There are many games with aggressive content designed for boys. These games, which involve the use of power, control and violence, attract the attention of boys more than girls. That's why boys may play more computer games than girls [17]. While the computer game addiction levels of students whose parents do not control their computer use are higher, the computer game addiction levels of students whose parents control their computer use are lower. In this case, it can be said that the family has a significant impact on computer game addiction. In this case, the responsibilities of families in this regard also increase. For this reason, families should be made aware of how they can control their children's computer game playing [16].

**Effects of computer games on children's development.** The computer not only offers children an entertainment and information environment in which they can actively participate, but also forces them to make independent decisions and make applications as individuals. Moreover, it has a structure that measures success or

failure, offers the opportunity to practice as much as one wishes, and allows one to repeat subjects that one does not understand as many times as one wishes [14]. Although children remain passive in front of the television, they show their creativity on the computer and become active thanks to computer games [11]. Video games make children addicted to their consoles. Because they gain morale by playing and winning repeatedly. They begin to think that shooting and killing is normal, and they do not feel guilty when they beat or attack their siblings or friends [11]. Computer games make positive or negative effects on children's development depending on screening time and rules and control of the parents.

**Effects of computer games on cognitive development of children.** Computer games offer a dynamic and interactive platform for children to engage in problem-solving, critical thinking, and decision-making. Many games require players to analyze information, and adapt to changing situations, thereby enhancing cognitive skills and executive functions [12]. However, excessive exposure to certain types of games may lead to attention problems, impulsivity, and difficulty with concentration. It has been revealed that some of the games stimulate mental skills and provide concentration for a long time [4].

**Effects of computer games on social development of children.** While computer games are often perceived as solitary activities, many incorporate multiplayer features that facilitate social interaction and collaboration among players. Online gaming communities provide opportunities for children to connect with peers, develop teamwork skills, and build friendships [6]. However, concerns arise regarding the potential for exposure to inappropriate behavior, cyberbully, and online predators within gaming environments. It was stated that children mostly display social behavior, engage in social interaction and participation, and social status roles while playing digital games [2].

**Effects of computer games on emotional development of children.** Computer games evoke a range of emotions in children, from excitement and joy to frustration and disappointment. Through immersive storytelling and character-driven narratives, games can elicit empathy, compassion, and emotional engagement. However,

excessive gaming and exposure to violent or intense content may desensitize children to real-world violence and negatively impact emotional regulation and empathy development. It was stated that involving digital games is a tool for relaxation and stress reduction [15], and improves mood and emotion regulation and by reducing emotional distress and anxiety [8].

**Effects of computer games on physical development of children.** One of the primary concerns surrounding computer games is their sedentary nature, which may contribute to a decline in physical activity levels among children. Prolonged screen time and lack of movement can lead to issues such as obesity, poor posture, and musculoskeletal problems [13]. Encouraging children to balance gaming with outdoor play, sports, and physical activities is essential for promoting overall health and well-being. Moreover, looking at the screen for a long time results in watering in the eyes, and visual disturbances [1].

**Parental Guidance and Regulation on children's playing computer games.** The age of starting to play computer games has decreased to pre-school age. It is seen that technological developments affect children's playing habits. Therefore, parents should help their children acquire correct gaming habits during this period. Mothers and fathers should be given information and consultancy on issues such as the selection of computer games, the duration of use, and the time of use [1]. Parents play a crucial role in guiding children's gaming habits and ensuring a healthy balance between screen time and other activities. Setting clear rules and boundaries, monitoring content and screen time, and fostering open communication about gaming habits and preferences are essential strategies for promoting responsible gaming behavior. Moreover, parents can model healthy media consumption habits and engage in co-playing activities to strengthen parent-child bonds and facilitate discussions about gaming-related topics.

**Conclusions.** As computer games continue to shape the landscape of children's play preferences, it is essential to recognize their multifaceted effects on cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. While computer games offer opportunities for learning, skill development, and entertainment, careful consideration

of content, duration, and parental involvement is crucial for mitigating potential risks and maximizing the benefits of gaming experiences. Digital games that do not contain aggression and violence, are appropriate for the age of children, and that support the development of intelligence, can contribute positively to the mental development of children if they are played under the supervision of parents and for a suitable period of time [2]. By fostering a balanced approach to gaming and promoting responsible gaming habits, parents, educators, and caregivers can help children navigate the digital world safely and thrive in an increasingly technology-driven society.

**Recommendations.** By implementing these recommendations, parents can help children navigate the digital landscape responsibly while promoting their overall well-being and development.

*Establish Clear Guidelines:* Parents should establish clear guidelines and limits regarding screen time and computer game usage. Set specific rules about when and how long children can play games, taking into account their age, developmental stage, and individual needs.

*Monitor Content:* Parents should actively monitor the content of the games their children play. Familiarize yourself with the rating systems used for video games and choose age-appropriate games that align with your family's values and beliefs. Be proactive in addressing any concerns or issues that arise from the content of the games.

*Encourage Balanced Activities:* Encourage children to engage in a variety of activities beyond gaming, including outdoor play, sports, creative pursuits, and social interactions with peers. Help children find a healthy balance between screen time and other forms of play and recreation.

*Promote Social Interaction:* Encourage children to engage in multiplayer games that foster social interaction and teamwork. Monitor their online interactions and teach them about responsible online behavior, including how to deal with cyberbully and inappropriate content.

*Emphasize Learning and Creativity:* Encourage children to play educational games that promote learning, problem-solving, and creativity. Look for games that

encourage critical thinking, strategic planning, and exploration of new concepts and ideas.

*Model Healthy Screen Habits:* Parents should serve as positive role models by demonstrating healthy screen habits themselves. Limit your own screen time, engage in activities that do not involve screens, and prioritize face-to-face interactions with family members.

*Encourage Physical Activity:* Encourage children to balance screen time with physical activity and outdoor play. Set aside time each day for active play, sports, or other physical activities to promote physical health and well-being.

*Open Communication:* Foster open and honest communication with your children about their gaming habits and experiences. Encourage them to share their thoughts, concerns, and questions about the games they play, and be willing to listen and provide guidance and support as needed.

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