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The relationship between children's social skills and computer game usage in Miandoab

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationships among children's social skills and computer games usage, by the analysis of their time spent on computer games, in Iran-Miandoab region primary schools in academic year of 2010-2011. The methodology of research is correlation and descriptive and it is applied from purpose viewpoint. The statistical population involves 2200 students and 237 students were selected according to Morgan sampling table. The data were collected by two questionnaire and they were analyzed by software SPSS, Spearman correlation coefficient tests. The results show that: There is a significant relationship between children's social skills and computer games usage.

Key words: children's social skills, computer games usage

INTRODUCTION

Children grow with playing without or with purpose, and play is natural and necessary in their development. Play gives children joy, amusement and motivation so that it encourages them to continue playing. Through play, children develop their cognitive, social, physical, and emotional abilities. Galiguzova (1995) described that children's play is filled with repetitions of and imaginations based on what they have heard, seen, and experienced. Play is a method for children to investigate their surrounding world with fantasy and creativity [1]. Anderson, Huston, Schmitt, Linegarger, and Wrigest (2001) mentioned that "creativity by young children may be manifested most obviously in imaginative play, that is, where children generate roles, characters, objects, and plots"[2]. They need the hands on approach to their world with enough human touch. The 1990 Tokyo International Conference on the Children's right to play discussed the lack of material resources for children's creative play [3].

Children use material objects for their pretend play or make-believe play. Through their play, they imitate and repeat what they have seen, heard and experienced. They associate together what they learned and experienced and create new ideas or games. Thus rich atmosphere for play with materials and time can give children much experience to develop their creativity. Inciting the 1989 adoption by General Assembly of the United Nations of the Convention on Children's Rights, Morris (1990) said that "Play is an educational process of fundamental importance and the birthright of every child". Children play not only for ontological reasons to learn social and cognitive skills for survival, but also for natural reasons to have fun, freedom, joy and passion, realizing at the boundary of real and not real world with internal motivation [4].

Children's play provides cognitive, social, emotional and physical developments. Gelfond and Salonius-Pasternak (2005) described the contributions of play such as "emotional regulation, peer and familial relationships, attention, problem solving, creativity, fine and gross motor skills and overall physical health"[5]. Russ (1996) pointed out that personality and affective processes are important into creative process, such as motivation, curiosity, self-confidence, and tolerance of ambiguity[6]. Thus, we can say that children's pretend play consists of affective and cognitive processes in the creative process. Play experience with materials and time seems to be necessary for children's emotional, social and cognitive development [7]. Piaget saw play as involving a mix between processes of accommodation and assimilation. Play is a child's natural and developmental process of learning. Through play, children develop their social, emotional, physical and cognitive development [4,8]. Piaget stressed the natural play without adult's interference and direct experiences through physical and social activity may develop children's cognitive development without structured educational forms [9]. Without an adult's direction or educational recitation, spontaneous and free natural play to interact with their surrounding enables children to develop their cognition [10].

Based on Bandura's (1973) social learning model, there has been long and deep concerns about the effects of playing computer games with violent content [11]. Anderson and Dill (2000) reported the exposure of violent video games increases violent behaviors. Another research study using meta-analysis, which tested the effects of violent video games on children's aggressiveness in laboratory and field settings, reveals that exposure to violent video games increases children's aggressiveness and decreases pro-social behavior [12].However, some researchers argue that violent content in computer games are different than actual aggression [5; 13;14; 15].

Online computer games can make it possible to interact together with other children who are known or not during computer games. Online games provide collaborative work with others too. Newman(2004) describes computer gamers' social and interactive activities as "players indicated the ways in which they learned from others, and helped others to learn, by sharing information on strategy and technique through talk and observing of the play of others"[16]. Greenberg(2004) pointed out the main reason for children's playing computer games as social aspects of computer games which generate friendship, social events and common interest that often goes beyond the playing itself [17]. Children produce the winning strategy together during the computer games by chatting, or by telegram[18]. Computer games provide a virtual place to meet and play with friends. Computer games provide the natural way of textural communication and especially in multi-player games; social skills are needed or must be developed [19]. Even some researchers argued the hypothesized link between frequent computer game play, social withdrawal and isolation can be no longer supportive [20]. Sakamoto's research found "a reverse causal relationship in which elementary school students with lower social adjustment tended to play video games" [21], i.e., they choose to do so. As a matter of fact, children are not playing alone at computer games, but play with others to produce a winning strategy. If they are good at playing computer games, they gain popularity and respect easily from peers.

One of the important goals of modern educational systems is to train individuals who are easily able to overcome the difficulties and problems in everyday life and the social environment [22]. These educational systems help people to obtain knowledge, skills and attitudes required for overcoming the difficulties. (Altun, 2003), Celest (2007) argued that even in such an environment where supportive individuals are abundant, students should have a vast social skills resource to enter the social and provide a stable social interaction to be considered socially independent [23; 24]. Failure of social skills can lead to academic, social problems and have a negative impact on future life [25].

Social skills are a set of learning capabilities that enable an individual interact with potentiality in an appropriate way in a social context. Among the most commonly known social skills are self expression, coping skills, communicative skills, making friends, interpersonal problem solving, the ability to regulate cognition, emotions and behavior of individuals (American Psychological Association, 2007). Appropriate social behavior in a particular social status is called social skills [26].

Tyler's social skills include[27]:
1 - Having the ability to calm down or be patient while facing anxiety in anxious social situations.
2 – Listening skills such as giving feedback
3 - Empathy with others in different situations
4 - Establishing a friendly relationship with others and continuing to interact with different people
5 - Self-disclosure

6 - Good eye contact

Gresham & Elliot (1990) considered social skills as a set of learned and reasonable behaviors that enables an individual to have effective relationships with others and avoid unreasonable social reactions. Cooperation, partnership with others, helping, being the initiator of the relationship, seeking help, praising others and appreciation, are examples of social skills [28]. UNICEF defines social skills as an approach based on changing or forming behavior which considers three areas of consideration for establishing balance: These 3 include: knowledge, attitudes, and skills. UNICEF's definition is based on research evidences which shows that, if in the empowerment of community members, knowledge, attitudes, skills, are not considered all together, the expected result, ie, reduction of risky behaviors, will not be achieved [29].

Social competence is a social dance between all participants, in that each individual evaluates and adjusts subtle differences of interaction, often on a subconscious level. It's very strange that most of children in order to join this dance fight and struggle with others or dance with different tunes and steps [30].

Interpersonal communication is the process by which we share information and feelings through verbal and nonverbal messages with others[31].

Interpersonal communication is the basis and cornerstone for human excellence and identity and forms the initial base of linking with others. Effective social skills cause individuals to flourish and improve the quality of the relationships. On the other hand, non-effective social skills prevent human's flourishing and are considered as a poison for relationships, they even destroy relationships. People involve in the relationship in search of identifying and deepening bonds with others in the community and also solve the problems of the society [32].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research method is descriptive and correlation and it is applied according to purpose. The statistical population consists of all 2200students of Miandooab region primary schools that 327students were selected by random sampling method according to Morgan table. The data were collected by using two questionnaires. Computer games and social skills questionnaire were employed for measuring of variables and the date were analyzed by software SPSS. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated 0.85 for the computer games and 0.81 for the social skills questionnaire, which indicates the reliability of the questionnaires is appropriate and desirable.

RESULTS

According to table 1 the correlation coefficient of 0.32 in significant level less than 0.000 was obtained between use of computer games and social skills that by confidence level of %99 it can be said that there is a significant relationship between use of computer games and social skills and in general hypothesis zero is rejected and the research hypothesis is confirmed.

Table 1: correlation use of computer games and social skills

Variable	**social skills**
use of computer games	r=0.32 P=0.000 n=327

CONCLUSION

Computer games correlated positively with children's social skills, Computer games provide children fantasy and realism which can make them feel real and vivid during playing computer games . Computer games provide many levels or graded challenge so that children choose their proper level to make a strategy for winning. Dimensions of control which computer games provide children may bring different results, Children feel ownership because they can control the game to choose their levels and can aim to improve their level. Computer games provided is the most appealing factor and computer games increase self-esteem after gamers fulfilled certain challenges or goals that the games provided. Computer games provide children an opportunity to create their own strategy for improving their level in many different ways.

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