

The Washington Post **Video-game addiction a real problem, study finds**

About 8.5 percent of youths affected, according to researcher

A new study concludes that children can become addicted to playing video games, with some skimping on homework, lying about how much they play and struggling, without success, when they try to cut back.

In what is described as the first nationally representative study in the United States on the subject, researcher Douglas Gentile of Iowa State University found that 8.5 percent of American youths ages 8 to 18 who play video games show multiple signs of behavioral addiction.

"For some kids, they play in such a way that it becomes out of balance. And they're damaging other areas of their lives, and it isn't just one area, it's many areas," said Gentile, a psychologist and assistant professor whose study was posted online today by the journal Psychological Science.

To get at gaming addiction, Gentile adapted diagnostic criteria for pathological gambling into a series of questions about video game use. The questions became part of a 2007 Harris Poll survey of 1,178 children and teens. Gamers were deemed "pathological" if they reported at least six of the 11 symptoms.

Symptoms included spending increasing amounts of time and money on video games to feel the same level of excitement; irritability or restlessness when play is scaled back; escaping problems through play; skipping chores or homework to spend more time at the controller; lying about the length of playing time; and stealing games or money to play more.

Four times as many boys as girls were considered "pathological gamers."

Gentile said he started his research with doubts about the possibility of addiction. "I thought this was parental histrionics -- that kids are playing a lot and parents don't understand the motivation, so they label it an addiction," he said. "It turns out that I was wrong."

What he found, he said, was that children considered pathological gamers did worse in school, had trouble paying attention in class and reported feeling "addicted." They were twice as likely to report attention-deficit disorder or attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder.

The study found that 88 percent of the nation's children ages 8 to 18 play video games. With 45 million children of that age in the country, the study would suggest that more than 3 million are addicted "or at least have problems of the magnitude" that call for help, Gentile said.

"It's not that the games are bad," said Gentile, who is also director of research at the nonprofit National Institute on Media and the Family. "It's not that the games are addictive. It's that some kids use them in a way that is out of balance and harms various other areas of their lives."

The study said that the findings leave many questions unresolved. The study could not say, for example, whether pathological game-playing caused poor school performance or whether "children who have trouble at school seek to play games to experience feelings of mastery."

Gentile also said the research did not indicate what the warning signs of addiction might be or how to best treat such a problem.

Even when the study accounted for hours of play, the gamers deemed addicted performed worse in school.

Other experts said that although they agree that too much video-gaming can take a toll, they are not convinced by the study's addiction findings.

"I think kids use this just the way kids watch television, the way kids now use their cellphones," said Michael Brody, chairman of the media committee of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. "They do it to relieve their anxiety and depression. It's all a matter of balance."

Mark Griffiths, director of the International Gaming Research Unit at Nottingham Trent University in the United Kingdom, contended that game addiction exists but in smaller numbers than the study suggests.

"In all honesty, if there really were 8.5 percent of children who were genuinely addicted, there would be treatment clinics all over America."

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that screen time, including television, computer and video games, not exceed one to two hours a day and that it be "quality programming."

Donald Shifrin, past chairman of the academy committee that examines media impact, said that "maybe this is an 'Aha!' moment for parents to say, 'We're going to look and see whether these games are being used in a balanced way.' "

"Video-game addiction a real problem, study finds"

1. According to the article, the researcher did this study because
 - A. he was concerned about the video-gaming habits of young people.
 - B. he had children who always played video games.
 - C. he doubted parents' claims about their children's video-game addiction.
 - D. he was paid to do the study by a video-game company.

(detail/evidence, RI1)

2. From the passage, one can conclude that video-gaming among young people
 - E. provides life skills for coping in life.
 - F. can help them become responsible citizens.
 - G. will lead to incarceration.
 - H. can become expensive and time-consuming.

(detail/evidence, RI1)

3. The statement which best describes this article is
 - A. a review of a research study on the video-gaming habits of teens.
 - B. a review of types of video games and their impact on the mind.
 - C. a review of parental attitudes towards video gaming habits of young people.
 - D. a review of the 11 symptoms diagnosing pathological gaming.

(central idea, RI2)

4. The word "histrionics" in paragraph 6 means
 - E. devotion.
 - F. judgment.
 - G. influence.
 - H. over-reaction.

(language, RI4)

5. One can infer from this article that
 - A. increased video-game playing leads to doing better in school.
 - B. increased video-game playing results in improved parent/teen relationships.
 - C. increased video-game playing can cause teens to skip their chores.
 - D. smart teens play video games.

(detail/evidence, RI1)

6. Three of the symptoms of pathological gaming addiction include:
 - E. dreaming about video game playing, irritability when play is scaled back, and lying about how much time one has played.
 - F. irritability when play is scaled back, spending more money and time on video games to get the same reward, and skipping chores or homework to play.
 - G. irritability when play is scaled back, playing the same game over and over and lying about playing time.
 - H. dreaming about video game playing, playing after midnight on a school night, and spending more time and money over time on video game playing.

(detail/evidence, RI1)

7. The main idea of the article is that
- A. parents and children need to be educated about how to play video games.
 - B. children’s video-gaming habits can lead to behavior problems.
 - C. the researcher did a good job finding conclusions that contradicted his thesis.
 - D. 8.5% of children who play video games are addicted.
- (central idea, RI2)*
8. According to the article, the study concludes that
- E. 1 out of ten children experience video game addiction.
 - F. 10% of children experience video game addiction.
 - G. 8.5% of youths experience video game addiction.
 - H. 8 out of 10 children play video games in the U.S.
- (detail/evidence, RI1)*
9. This article was written by
- A. the Iowa State University.
 - B. Donna St. George.
 - C. Douglas Gentile.
 - D. a 2007 Harris Poll survey.
- (point of view, RI6)*
10. According to the article, out of 45 million children ages 8 to 18 in the U.S.,
- E. 88% of them are addicted to video game playing.
 - F. 3 million of the children play video games.
 - G. 3 million of the children are addicted to video game playing.
 - H. 45 million of the children skip their homework and lie.
- (detail/evidence, RI1)*

- 1 - C
- 2 - H
- 3 - A
- 4 - H
- 5 - C
- 6 - F
- 7 - B
- 8 - G
- 9 - B
- 10 - G

Possible Summary:

This article summarizes a study to determine the pervasiveness of video-game addiction behaviors among US teens and children. (*central idea, CC2*) The researcher, Douglas Gentile, found his theory that parents were overstating their children's video-game addiction was incorrect. (*detail/evidence, CC2*) Based on 1,178 survey respondents, Gentile discovered that 8.5 percent of the youth surveyed reported at least six of the 11 symptoms, indicating video-game addiction. (*central idea, CC2*) Controlled by their need to continually play video games, some children will lie, become irritable, and neglect their chores. (*detail/evidence, CC2*) If these numbers from the survey were projected out, more than 3 million children in the US could be addicted. (*detail/evidence, CC2*)

Analysis of Craft:

This **news story** (*genre, CC5*) is organized by **thesis with evidence** supported with **examples** ("Symptoms included spending increasing amounts of time and money on video games to feel the same level of excitement; irritability or restlessness when play is scaled back; skipping chores or homework to play; and lying about the length of playing time.") and **statistics** ("...8.5 percent of American youths ages 8 to 18 who play video games show multiple signs of behavioral addiction.") (*organization, CC5*) The **title** identifies the premise and thesis of the article. (*central idea, CC2*) The author **quotes** an expert, Douglas Gentile, and a reputable poll, the Harris Poll. (*organization, CC5*) The **author and date of the passage** are identified indicating that the information is relatively up-to-date and can be researched. (*point of view, CC 6*) The author uses **vivid verbs** such as "skimping" and "struggling," **domain-specific vocabulary** such as "pathological," and the signal words, "for example," to introduce a supporting detail. (*language, CC4*) (Words in boldface refer to author's craft, structure, and perspective.)