

## The Impact of Computer Games on School Children's Paintings (An interdisciplinary study)

Given the upward trend in the spread and influence of computer games in the contemporary world and the development of such games into one of the most leading forms of children's entertainment, it seems that such amusement tools are affecting children's drawings through driving the visual elements towards defined virtual data and thus, alienating children from real environments and influencing the creativity and psychological structure of children's drawings.

This study aims to investigate the impact of overusing computer games on the structure of children's drawings. A custom made questionnaire was used to conduct this comparative study on 126 male schoolchildren aged between 6 and 10 and studying in a school in Tehran's District One. Twenty children were divided in two groups of ten: one with members using less computer games while the other one consisted of those who made heavy use of computer games. Both groups were given a drawing test, the assessment criterion of which was determined by three specialists and two evaluators.

In each period of a child's development, his or her beliefs are formed based on the notions of the nature and his/her real surroundings in that specific stage of life. Given the increasing growth of computer hardware and software and the role they play as the main and inseparable part of everyday life, some fundamental beliefs of the modern human have indisputably been affected. Computer games are one of such influential factors. Therefore, here two major questions arise. First, what impacts do computer games leave on the visual structure of a child's drawing? And second, do computer games influence the psychological structure of a child's drawing? Furthermore, the impression of these games on players, particularly children and teenagers, will be thoroughly investigated.

The research results indicate distinct differences in the attitudes and pictorial memory of children who incessantly play computer games in comparison with those who spend less time playing yet more time making contact with real and objective environments.

According to the theories and definitions provided by Locke, Piaget and Freeman, the realism of different stages of a child's drawing is not normal when the mental data is gained virtually and influenced by computer games. Based on the research results, playing computer games slightly (maximum one hour per week) did not have a negative impact on children's drawings.

However, playing computer games more than two and a half hours a week incurred some serious problems in the visual structure and content of children's drawings. According to the analytical, descriptive and qualitative findings, 77% of children play computer games more than an hour per day. Considering the playtime, there are differences in children's drawings in the two groups. Qualitative investigations also indicate that the overuse of computer games disrupts the

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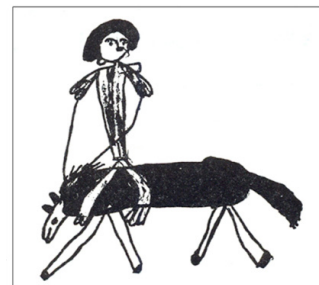
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formation of the structures of children's drawings. Findings show that although some studies point out some slight advantages for playing computer games; however, the overuse of such games will leave undesirable effects which can be observed in children's drawings known as a diagnostic tool during childhood stage.

This confirms the findings based on which one cannot make a unilateral conclusion on the impact of computer games. The playtime should also be taken into account to judge the problem and to train families.

**Keywords:** Drawing, Child, Computer Games, Visual Elements, Realism

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