

## Abstract

Video games have become a staple for many and within the past 15 years, they have become very beloved and mainstreamed especially for today's late adolescents (Engelstätter & Ward, 2022). Children aged 10-14 are said to be easily influenced and emotionally insecure about being different. In 2017, Knoll et al., suggested that playing video games during developmental ages may affect their emotional intelligence (i.e., empathy) and decision making in adulthood. This is why I propose a study to look at empathy and ethical decision making in adolescent gamers to understand the effects of different video game genres has on adults.

## Introduction

- Data from 2021 shows, the number of games in the world was estimated at 2.96 billion and about 3 billion people worldwide play video games.
- The best-selling PC game of all time is PlayerUnknown's Battleground (PUBG), with over 70 million copies sold worldwide.
- With many literatures discussing whether video games can cause violent tendencies, literature has yet to study its effectiveness on one's empathy and ethical decision making.

- This is why I am proposing a study where empathy and ethical decision making can be looked at in those who play different video game genres rather than video games in general.
- **Hypothesis:** Those who play more role-playing video games will have higher scores of empathy and ethical decision making than those who play more action role-playing and first-person shooter video games.

## Current Studies

- Recent research has focused mainly on the relationship between video games and aggression but there is little to no research on how video games affect other emotions and behaviors.
- There is a clear lack of literature surrounding video games and ethical decision making.
- The existing literature in which video games and empathy is being studied is also lacking.
- When defining video games, many studies lacked the specificities of what kind, what genre or even what device the video games were being played on.
- Current studies lack research between media and ethical decision making.

## Proposed Study

- Participants: Male and females who actively play RPG, ARPG, and or FPS video games.
- Target age range: Between the ages of 18 and 28.
- Participants will be invited into a lab environment to fill out questionnaire on their empathy.
- Participants will then be moved in a controlled environment to assess ethical decision making.

## Materials

- Participants will be asked to fill out The Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ) (Spreng et al., 2009).
- Participants will also be asked to fill out the Questionnaire Measure of Emotional Empathy (QMEE) (Epstein et al., 1972).
- Participants will then be moved into a lab environment where they will be asked to proceed with the task of playing a video game.
- Within the lab environment there will be a computer where participants will be asked to play "The Quandary".
- The Quandary is a free game where "players must make difficult decisions in which there is no one right answer in the game, just as in real life, but important consequences – to themselves, to others in the community and to the planet Braxos. In their interactions

with other settlers in the group, players must consider facts, opinions and solutions, just like in real life".

## Proposed Analysis

- After participant completion of both the TEQ and QMEE, scoring will be done according to original scoring instructions.
- Ethical decision-making scoring and analysis will be analyzed by doing two one-way ANOVAs in R.
- Each ANOVA test will be analyzing all three video game genres as well as each other variables (e.g., empathy or ethical decision-making).

## Discussion and Conclusion

- Since this is a proposed study, there is yet to be results.
- If results were available, my hope would be that they would be correlational with my hypothesis in which results would indicate that those who play more role-playing video games would score higher on empathy and ethical decision-making than those who play more action role-playing and first-person shooter video games.
- There is a clear gap in the literature where empathy and ethical decision making are an active variable in research involving video games.
- For future research, I propose more exploratory variables such as different video game genres as well as their affects on different emotions and behaviors.