

Video games linked to poor relationships with friends, family

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A new study connects young adults' use of video games to poorer relationships with friends and family - and the student co-author expresses disappointment at his own findings.

Brigham Young University undergrad Alex Jensen and his faculty mentor, Laura Walker, publish their results Jan. 23 in the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*.

The research is based on information collected from 813 college students around the country. As the amount of time playing video games went up, the quality of relationships with peers and parents went down.

"It may be that young adults remove themselves from important social settings to play video games, or that people who already struggle with relationships are trying to find other ways to spend their time," Walker said. "My guess is that it's some of both and becomes circular."

For the record, Walker did not stand in the way of her family's wish for a Nintendo Wii. Jensen had hoped to find some positive results as justification for playing Madden NFL.

Study participants reported how often they play video games. They also answered a battery of questions measuring relationship quality, including how much time, trust, support and affection they share with friends and parents.

But the researchers say video games do not themselves mean "game over" for a relationship because the connection they found is modest.

"Relationship quality is one of a cluster of things that we found to be modestly associated with video games," Walker said. "The most striking part is that everything we found clustered around video game use is negative."

Statistical analyses also revealed that the more young adults play video games, the more frequent their involvement in risky behaviors like drinking and drug abuse. Young adults who played video games daily reported smoking pot almost twice as often as occasional players, and three times as often as those who never play.

For young women, self-worth was low if their video game time was high.

And despite heavy involvement with the research, Jensen does not admit the results to his own family. For now he holds out hope that future research will exonerate consoles or games designed for multiple players.

He's also curious how video games may affect young couples. Nearly three-fourths of college-aged men in the study played video games regularly. By comparison, just 17 percent of their female counterparts played more than once a month.

"The gender imbalance begs the question of whether chasing a new high score beats spending quality time with a girlfriend or wife," Jensen said.

Source: Brigham Young University

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