

# UQ study confirms dangers of violent video games

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(Medical Xpress) -- New research by Dr. Brock Bastian from UQ's School of Psychology has found evidence that playing violent video games leads players to see themselves, and their opponents, as lacking in core human qualities such as warmth, open-mindedness, and intelligence.

In a recently published paper in the [Journal of Experimental Social Psychology](#), Dr Bastian and his co-authors looked at whether the experience of cyber-violence had dehumanising consequences for the self-concept of [game players](#) and well as their opponents.

Dr. Bastian said given his findings, it was not surprising that many people were concerned about the effects of playing [violent video games](#), especially when they appeared to reflect changes in people's behavior, emotions, and cognitions in ways consistent with a loss of humanity.

"There are good reasons to be concerned: the negative effects of violent video games have been well documented and appear to be more significant than those associated with other forms of [violent media](#)," he said.

Study participants were opponents engaged in [violent behaviour](#) against each other in the popular game, Mortal Kombat.

Dr. Bastian says he believes the findings of this study point to the potential long-term effects of violent [video game](#) play and suggest that repeated exposure to these dehumanising experiences may result in

chronic changes in self-perception.

The study also explored whether fighting against computer-generated avatars, as opposed to other [players](#), diminished one's humanity, and in both studies the findings were compared against a similar but non-violent video game.

Dr. Bastian said he expected the result that engaging in the violent, compared to the non-violent video game, would lead players to view themselves as less human.

"We also expected that, in line with previous work on real-life violence, players would view their opponents as less human when they were the targets of violence compared to when they were opponents in a non-violent video game," he said.

"In addition, we found that although players felt dehumanised when engaging in video game violence, even when this is directed towards computer-generated avatars, it is only when another player is the target of this violence that they are also dehumanized."

Dr. Bastian explained that one reason violence within video games was more powerful than other forms of violent media was that people identified with, and to some extent felt responsible for, the violence they perpetuated within virtual environments.

The second part of the study had participants playing each game in collaboration with a co-player, such that both players were playing together against computer-generated avatars.

"Although we made no specific predictions about how participants would view co-perpetrators, we were open to the idea that their dehumanisation would be less evident given they were not the targets of

violence," Dr. Bastian said.

The findings of this study supported those of Study 1 – playing a violent video game reduces perceptions of one's own humanity even when playing in collaboration, rather than against, another co-player.

"The findings of Study 2 also showed that simply playing a violent game with another person did not affect perceptions of their humanity. Ratings of other people's humanity were only lowered when the other was the target of cyber-violence, not when the other was a co-perpetrator of that [violence](#)," Dr. Bastian said.

Provided by University of Queensland

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