'Parents know best about effects of video games on children'

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A study has found that parents who reported playing video games with their children are about three times more likely to have a handle on the effects gaming have on young people as compared with adults who are not parents and those who have never played.

The research by the University of Oxford and Cardiff University looks at how the actual experience of playing video games may affect people's attitudes on their benefits and potential harm. The researchers found

parents in general and those who played games with their children were most likely to assess the risks and benefits accurately (i.e. in line with current scientific wisdom).

The study also found adults who were not parents and who played video games a lot were likely to see benefits and downplay the possible risks of video games for children. Those who played just a few times a year and women were the groups most likely to believe that technology has a largely negative effect on young people.

The paper includes a total of three studies carried out with 5,000 people in the UK and the US. In the US, a nationally representative population sample was asked whether video games could be linked to real-life violence such as mass shootings. Older people and women tended to report less regular exposure to games and less positive attitudes, with these groups and non-gamers more likely to say video games were linked to mass shootings. These groups were also more likely to favour laws to limit the playing of video games by young people.

Co-author Dr Andrew Przybylski, from the Oxford Internet Institute at Oxford University, said: 'You might expect parents to be the ones that want the most accurate information about the effects of video games on children. This sample of parents showed they did get it right on this issue as their assessment chimed with current scientific opinion that any positive and negative effects of video games on children are small. This could be because they have first-hand experience of playing video games with their children or because they see their children's behaviour after playing games. Meanwhile, the surveys show regular players who are not parents seem less aware of any negative effects that video games might have on young children.'

Dr Przybylski added: 'Our study shows the public's responses to questions about the likely effects of video games are influenced by

whether or not they play video games themselves or experience them through their [children](). Our tendency to see this issue in a biased way, rather than on the basis of scientific evidence, should be carefully considered by those producing, studying, and drafting laws regulating digital technologies.'

The paper, 'How we see electronic games', is published in the journal, *PeerJ*.

More information: Andrew K. Przybylski et al. How we see electronic games, *PeerJ* (2016). [DOI: 10.7717/peerj.1931]()

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