

Chapter 3

Genre Differences in Soft Skills Perception and Video Game Usage in the University of Extremadura

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ABSTRACT

The preconceived notion concerning negative effects of video games and students' academic performance is a widely known subject. However, some investigations explore the positive impact of video games on academic performance. With a sample of 247 university students, this chapter studies the perception of both gamers and non-gamers about soft skills and their current relevance in academic and professional fields. The possible relationships linking the intensity of the usage of video games, academic performance, and the perception concerning soft skills are investigated. The results expose a generalized positive perception respecting the relation between video games and the development of soft skills, specifically to the video game genre and its relevance and influence on academic performance, as well as gender differences, where women prevail in emotional and social managements, although this influence is not elevated.

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INTRODUCTION

For a number of years now, the scientific community has been studying how video games may affect gamers. The focus of this research has mainly been on the potential negative effects of playing video games, especially in children and adolescents. However, the results of several researches suggest that the popular thinking on the alleged harmful effects of games should be tempered by considering its positive results (Barr, 2017). For that matter, time spent on commercial video games without specific training purposes has repercussions on specific key skills that may positively affect academic and professional development.

Video games seem to offer improvements in a set of cognitive functions. Some of which seem to be generalized to real world contexts (Granic & Engel, 2013) and in professional training results are being obtained, such as the study by Kapustina & Martynova (2020) that demonstrates positive results of the application of video games in the training process, thus it may be recommended to train staff.

Through a descriptive design and cross-sectional study, the relation between the usage of video games by university students and the effects on some soft skills and on academic performance indicators is explored. Previous to the commencement of the research's body, the authors mention some details as a context and *State of the Art* of the following elements to introduce the research hypotheses.

In this chapter the authors work with four hypotheses about the perception that a number of university students (247) of Economics and Human Resources degrees have about video games through various questionnaires. The first three are about video games playing and genre and its relationship with three key soft skills (Complex Problem Solving, Leadership and Organization), the last hypothesis aims to know the perception of the same students regarding the influence (positive or negative) of video games playing and genre in their academic performance. Author's objective is to know the perception of these hypotheses in a sample that represents the general opinion of the subject among the student community.

In the first section of this article you will find a bibliographic review of the main study topics: the effect of video games, the importance of soft skills and academic performance and what is the influence of video games on them. In the second section the authors explain the methodology: study focus groups, materials used and their justification. In the third section the authors show the tables with the results and equivalences in the form of graphs and interpretation. Finally in the fourth section discussion and conclusions can be found as usual in these cases.

University Students

The previous research in relation to video games and academic performance has frequently focused on primary and secondary education; therefore, it is required to execute specific activities focused on university students due to their short-term professional projection. The university period is characterized by being a period in which young adults begin their higher education stage with the aim of obtaining an academic degree that permits ideal access to specific job positions (Martínez et al., 2016).

The results obtained in previous educational stages may —on occasions— not be extrapolated to university students since a greater standard of maturity and responsibility are assumed, as indicated in their work by Burgess et al. (2012). University students conventionally have superior self-regulation mechanisms to invest time in digital leisure than younger students; hence the negative consequences of the usage of video games associated with academic results are inferior in this circumstance, permitting to benefit from the positive effects of these devices.

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