Violent Video Games Linked to Increased Aggression

It's the first study to demonstrate cause-and-effect, researchers say

-- Mary Elizabeth Dallas

TUESDAY, May 31 (HealthDay News) -- Violent video games trigger aggression among those who play them, according to a new University of Missouri study.

Such players showed more hostility because their brains had become less responsive, or desensitized, to violence -- a response that the researchers linked to increased aggression.

"From a psychological perspective, video games are excellent teaching tools because they reward players for engaging in certain types of behavior. Unfortunately, in many popular video games, the behavior is violence," study co-author Bruce Bartholow, an associate professor of psychology at UM College of Arts and Sciences, said in a university news release.

Although other studies have linked gamers' desensitization to violence with increased aggression, the study is the first to demonstrate cause-and-effect, the researchers said.

The study is published in the current issue of the Journal of Experimental Social Psychology.

In the study, researchers instructed 70 young adults to play either a nonviolent or a violent video game for 25 minutes. Afterwards, their brain responses were measured as they viewed two groups of photos -- one neutral (such as a man riding a bike), the other violent (such as a man sticking a gun in another man's mouth).

The study found that participants assigned to play a violent video game had a reduced response to the violent photos -- an indication their brains had become desensitized to the violence.

Researchers pointed out, however, that participants who had experience with the violent video games prior to the study showed small brain responses to the violent photos, regardless of which type of game they were assigned to play.
"It could be that those individuals are already so desensitized to violence from habitually playing violent video games that an additional exposure in the lab has very little effect on their brain responses," said Bartholow, adding that there were additional factors to consider.

Researchers also discovered that a reduced brain response to violence predicted the gamers' levels of aggression: The weaker the brain response to violent photos, the more aggressive the participants were.

In this portion of the study, players were assigned a competitive task that allowed them to use a controllable blast of noise against their opponent. How loud the players made the noise for their rival was the measure researchers used to determine how aggressive they were.

The study found those who played one of several popular violent games, such as "Call of Duty," "Hitman," "Killzone" and "Grand Theft Auto," set louder noise blasts for their opponents during the competitive task than those who played nonviolent games.

The researchers concluded that future research should also focus on ways to control the effects of media violence, especially among children whose developing brains could become accustomed to violent behavior.

**More information**

The American Psychological Association provides more information on the adverse effects of violent video games.
Tuition increase attempts to close budget deficit

The increase will bring in about $18.7 million to MU.

By Hunter Woodall Published June 1, 2011

Following Gov. Jay Nixon’s decision to cut higher education spending for the state of Missouri by 7 percent, and MU’s decision to increase tuition by 5.8 percent, officials are speaking out about the impact the money will have on the university.

After announcing the increase, Nixon came out with a statement that questioned the UM System Board of Curators’ decision.

"This tuition proposal is well beyond the increase in the cost of living allowed by statute," Nixon said in a January statement. "This should get the scrutiny it deserves from the Commissioner of Higher Education."

Office of Student Financial Aid Director Jim Brooks has said the tuition increase will also play a greater role in providing aid for new and returning students.

"The University of Missouri has not raised tuition for Missouri residents during the past two academic years," Brooks said. "Twenty percent of the income from the tuition increase will go toward financial aid during the 2011-2012 school year."

Despite the higher tuition cost that out-of-state students face, Brooks remains adamant that aid is available for anybody who applies.

In the past four years, MU has increased enrollment annually while raising tuition for out-of-state students to attend the school. This fall semester marks the first time tuition will have risen for in-state students in several years.

"We regularly analyze the impact of the enrollment growth upon our students to ensure they are having a quality educational experience and have found many indicators that show that they are," Enrollment Management Vice Provost Ann Korschgen said.

MU spokesman Christian Basi said the university is currently facing a $7 million deficit. He also said that MU would gain revenue of roughly $18.7 million from the tuition increase.
"If we wanted to get our maintenance and repair budget back to the way we really wanted to have it, we would have been facing a (greater) budget deficit," Basi said. "We have more than $500 million in repair needs on campus that have not been addressed."

The deficit also includes stabilizing the budget for maintenance and repair. Every year MU budgets 1 percent of the worth of each building on campus for repairs. Basi said due to the state of the budget, these repairs have not been made in several years.

"The cuts from the state are going to be as much $12.7 million to our current budget," Basi said. "We take a portion of the tuition increase and put that into undergraduate scholarships."

Although MU is hoping the increase in revenue will help lessen the impact of the deficit, the university is still using its own money to maintain the quality of life on campus.

"We're also having to dip into our reserves and use about $5 million," Basi said. "With that, we are still facing that deficit."
RAWLINS, Wyo. (AP) — A wind farm slated for southern Wyoming will use military technology to track birds and bats in hopes of preventing them from being killed by the turbines.

A radar system coming to the wind project just south of Rawlins will help developer Power Co. of Wyoming LLC collect data about the habitat and migration patterns of golden eagles, bald eagles, hawks and other bird species and bats at the proposed 1,000-turbine wind energy project.

The Casper Star-Tribune reports that the information will be used in a management plan for birds and bats on the company's Chokecherry and Sierra Madre Wind Energy Project.

Garry Miller, director of land and environmental affairs for the company, said in a statement that the radar bird study is intended to "avoid, minimize and mitigate potential impacts to wildlife" caused by the wind project.

"Previous radar studies have not been specifically designed to detect and understand eagle use patterns, so this is one of the first applications of the technology," he said.

The monitoring program will identify areas of high eagle usage, which may then be considered when siting turbines and designing the Eagle Conservation Plan, according to the company.

The proposed wind farm would be spread across 154 square miles of the Overland Trail Cattle Co. ranch. Plans call for a 2,500 megawatt, $4 billion to $6 billion wind farm site. PCW is a subsidiary of Denver-based Anschutz Corp., which owns the ranch.

The radar monitoring system joins the wind energy project's sage grouse monitoring program launched last year. Fifty female grouse were tagged with GPS tracking devices, and a male grouse study in the ranch area is being conducted by scientists from the
University of Missouri, U.S. Forest Service, Wyoming Game and Fish Department and others.

The Bureau of Land Management is currently preparing an environmental impact statement on the wind power project, since it spans a combination of private and federal land. A draft of the impact statement is expected sometime next year. Once BLM and the company have obtained state and county permission, construction would begin in 2012 or 2013.
CAPE GIRARDEAU, Mo. (AP) — Neighbors who have complained about loud parties thrown by Southeast Missouri State University students have convinced Cape Girardeau officials to consider a city ordinance that would increase police authority to regulate or break up the festivities.

A group of the college's neighbors suggested that the city enact a "nuisance parties" ordinance similar to one enforced in Columbia in 2006. At the direction of the Cape Girardeau City Council, police chief Carl Kinnison and city attorney Eric Cunningham are working on the ordinance and are expected to present it to the council June 6.

Columbia's ordinance defines a "nuisance party" as a social gathering of 10 or more people on a residential property where any of 11 things occur, including fighting, littering, illegal sales or possession of alcohol, public urination, trespassing, noise violations and indecent exposure, The Southeast Missourian reported.

The offenses are already illegal in Cape Girardeau. But the ordinance would allow police to cite the party's hosts and issue citations if those at the party ignore orders to disperse. Fines could be up to $500 with a maximum jail time of 90 days.

That would be welcome news to neighbors such as Linda Hutson, who said the noise and disruption from parties make life miserable.

"During the school year, starting in September, every Thursday, Friday and Saturday night, I wonder if I'm going to get a good night's sleep or if I'm going to get bumped out of bed at 3 o'clock in the morning," Hutson said.
In the last 12 months, police responded to 158 incidents arising from complaints about loud music, many of them from college parties, and issued 22 summonses for failing to maintain an orderly house. Kinnison estimated 80 percent to 85 percent of loud parties police respond to are hosted and attended by university students.

"I think (the ordinance) would give us another tool to help take care of some of this," Kinnison said.

Columbia assistant city attorney Cavaneauh Noce said the ordinance has made a huge difference in the home of University of Missouri's flagship campus. He remembers enduring drunken toga parties with more than 150 people in the streets. That doesn't happen anymore.

"Things quieted down after people became aware of the ordinance," Noce said. "I know everybody felt like it did some good."

The leaders of the Cape Girardeau group have been pushing for help for nearly two years. Some city council members and staff thought the best way to address the concerns would be an ordinance that would require landlords to pay for annual licenses, which would require routine inspections of their properties, the Southeast Missourian reported.

"But we're not quite ready to do that, so the plan now is to move forward with something on that party ordinance and then have it eventually fold into the rental inspections," Mayor Harry Rediger said.

Dennis Holt, vice president of enrollment management and student success at Southeast, said the university could become more involved in monitoring student behavior away from campus if students were cited with criminal infractions.