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# Video Game Addiction and College Performance Among Males: Results of a One Year Longitudinal Study



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## Introduction

Video games are played by the vast majority of Americans between the ages of 2 and 17, with males showing higher usage rates (Lenhart et. al., 2008). Furthermore, recent research has demonstrated that 9% of male gamers ages 8 to 18 are addicted to playing video games. Those addicted were significantly more likely to have a lower GPA, have greater difficulty paying attention in class, and were more likely to have been involved in a physical fight over the past year compared to non-addicted gamers (Gentile, 2009).

The majority of video game addiction research has focused on adolescent gamers. The purpose of the present study was to investigate video game addiction among college males and the impact video game addiction has on college engagement and student success.

## Hypotheses

1. Video game addiction would have a significant negative relationship with expected college engagement.
2. Video game addiction would have a significant negative relationship with college GPA.
3. Video game addiction would have a significant positive relationship with drug and alcohol violations during the first year of college.

## Method

### Participants and Procedure

- Participants were 477 male freshman college students.
- Participants completed an online survey on video game addiction as well as a paper survey on college engagement. Both were taken a week prior to the participants' first college class.
- College success measures including GPA and drug and alcohol violations were collected from the Office of the Registrar and the Residential Life and Housing Office at SJU.

## Materials

### Video Game Addiction Scale

- Based on the DSM-IV criteria for pathological gambling, modified for video game addiction ( $\alpha = 0.84$ ) (Gentile, 2009).

### Engagement in the College Experience Scale

- Self-reported likelihood of active participation in academics, social relationships, and experiential learning while enrolled in college ( $\alpha = 0.70$ ) (Higher Education Research Institute [HERI], 2013).

### First-Year Cumulative GPA

- Cumulative GPA was recorded at the end of the spring 2014 semester. Cumulative GPA represents the participants' first-year in college.

### Drug and Alcohol Violations

- Whether or not participants were officially charged with a drug and/or alcohol violation during their first year in college. The data point was not self-reported, rather, it was taken from official university records.

## Results

- Correlation and hierarchical linear regression were used in analyses.
- ACT score and ethnicity were not covariates of video game addiction.

### Engagement in the College Experience

- Video game addiction was negatively correlated with college engagement,  $r(383) = -.18, p < .05$ . Therefore, participants with a high level of videogame addiction tended to have a lower levels of expected college engagement.

### Academic Success in College

- Video game addiction score was a significant negative predictor of first-year college GPA, even when controlling the participants' high school GPA (see Table 1).
- Therefore, participants with a high level of video game addiction tended to earn a lower cumulative GPA compared to participants who had a low level of video game addiction. This result was significant even when controlling for past academic performance.

**Table 1**

*Hierarchical Regression Predicting First-Year College GPA with Video Game Addiction Score.*

		B	SE <sub>B</sub>	$\beta$	t
Step 1	High School GPA	1.09	.09	.54	12.2**
Step 2	Addiction Score	-.08	.04	-.10	-.10*
Step 3	Interaction	-.01	.02	-.19	.42

\*\* p < 0.01 level; \* p < 0.05 level

## Drug and Alcohol Violations

- Contrary to our hypothesis, video game addiction was negatively correlated with participants' drug and alcohol violations,  $r(383) = -.12, p < .05$ .
- Therefore, participants with high levels of video game addiction tended to be less likely to have been found guilty of a drug or alcohol violation compared to participants with a low level of video game addiction.

## Discussion

Video game addiction was shown to have a significant negative relationship with expected college engagement as well as with first-year in college cumulative GPA. Contrary to our hypothesis, higher levels of video game addiction were associated with less instances of drug and alcohol violations. Additional longitudinal data including persistence, graduation rate, and job placements will provide a more complete depiction of the role video game addiction plays in male student success.

Initial findings should compel university officials to pay greater attention to how video game addiction affects their students. Policies to mitigate the negative impact of video game addiction may be warranted.

## References

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