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Multitasking: The effects of watching Netflix and reading comprehension

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Netflix and Reading Comprehension

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Abstract

This study represents the method of multitasking. Specifically, I conducted a between-group experiment examining the relationship of multitasking to reading comprehension. This experiment was tested by undergraduate students (n=20) at The College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University in Central Minnesota. Participants varied from 18-21 years old and included 3 males and 17 females. In the first condition, (the control group) participants read an ACT practice reading test. In the second condition (the experimental group) participants read the ACT reading comprehension test while watching Netflix on the same screen. The dependent variable was the score on the ACT practice questions. The participants were recruited from a convenience sample. Findings from my study include a significant relationship between multitasking of Netflix and reading comprehension.

Introduction

Multitasking is beginning to be a cruel habit for many college students when it comes to combining homework and social media or social networking of any kind. Particularly, multitasking has been known to decrease the level of understanding the comprehension specific content when distracted by any type of media (Jeong & Hwang, 2012). Studies have shown, these self control habits are then leading to a reduction in academic performance. Researchers have looked into the fact of why students get distracted by social media and have no self control; it leads to an emotional need that students feel satisfied by. With an increase in this behavior, researchers are beginning to show a concern on how this effects a students academic performance (Calderwood, Green, Joy-Gaba & Moloney, 2016).

Previous research shows multitasking with Social Network Sites can effect both productivity and efficiency in a negative way when it pertains to academics. This specific study refers to multitasking in a different term. They call it "task-switching." Researchers claim to call it task-switching because they claim multi-tasking, to humans, is not something that is actually possible. In this study specifically, it shows that "task-switching" has a negative impact on productivity and efficiently performance (Karpinski et al., 2013). In recent studies, researchers would recommend not to switch from task to task because it can effect the outcome of the more important task one is focusing on. Task switching's can include, switching from homework to Facebook or reading to watching a video for example. If one wants to succeed on the more important task, the researcher suggests not to let the secondary task intrude with the primary task (Cho, Altarriba & Popiel, 2015).

Due to the large amounts of multitasking, my study seeks to understand the relationship between social media and the level of comprehension. I hypothesized if one attempts to multitask by watching Netflix and reading a passage followed by answering questions, it will show a negative impact on the amount of questions answered correctly by the participant.

Method

Participants

- 20 participants from a private liberal arts institution in central Minnesota.
- The average age of participants was 19.45 years old. The age range was 19 to 21 years old.
- 17 females and 3 males participated in the study. The participants were recruited from a convenience sample.

Materials

While conducting my research I used an ACT Prep practice reading comprehension test and a Netflix account on a Mac Book lab top. While reading the comprehension and watching Netflix the participant used headphones as well. The reading comprehension quiz included 5 multiple choice questions ranging from a-d that they recorded in paper pencil format. The dependent variable of this study is the score on the five point test of comprehension. The independent variable of this study included watching Netflix. The results were then put in an anonymous envelope and analyzed after all participants were finished.

Procedure

After participants were randomly placed in their conditions using block randomization, the participants in the first condition (control group) were asked to read and answer practice questions from an ACT practice prep.

The second condition group, (experimental group) were asked to read the ACT practice test and answer the questions while watching the Netflix show "Friends" on the same screen.

After conducting my research, I then analyzed my results using SPSS.

Results

The control group (reading comprehension without watching Netflix) mean=3.8 (SD= 1.03). The experimental group (watching Netflix and reading at the same time) mean=2.7 (SD=.948). $t(18)=2.48$, $p=.023$. The 95% confidence interval ranged from .168 (ll) to 2.031 (ul).

Discussion

Due to all adults, mostly college students, using the method of multitasking in their daily lives of balancing school work and a social life, I hypothesized that multitasking would have a negative effect on the reading comprehension scores. Furthering my hypothesis, I examined the relationship of multitasking between Netflix and reading comprehension. From this study my results indicated that there was significance between Netflix and reading comprehension. The participants in my study that watched Netflix and did the reading comprehension scored lower on their reading comprehension follow up questions, assuming this was due to the distraction of Netflix being on at the same time.

This study had good internal validity. In the experiment I used a between-groups design, therefore participants were unaware of how the study was comparing them to multitasking and non multitasking participants. This design created an easier way to keep each variable controlled in a way it should have been. This study had strong construct validity because the data was measures out of a 5-point scale. The participants were able to know an exact score out of 5 that they received on the reading comprehension questions. The study did not have a strong external validity. The participants were recruited based on a convenience, which is not a well representation of the population at large because the sample was not selected at random. Some participants were from the psychology class, which can change their perspective and the way they think/react to the experiment. All of the participants were college students from a small private central Minnesota college, which may have impacted the results do to a less representative sample.

In future research, I would like to have a greater amount of sample size to compare more of the participants. I would also like to have more of an equal number of males to females. Not only would I want to look at reading comprehension and Netflix multitasking, but look at cell phone use and homework. If I examined cell phones and homework as a multitasking method, I would hypothesis that students spend more time on their phones than they do on their homework, which then result in lower GPA scores in high school and college students.

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