

Athletes and Video Games: Is There a Correlation?

Parker Wiseman

I have often heard people refer to those who play video games as nerds and losers. Many have said that they should get a life and that video games rot your brain and make you fat. Others believe that real athletes do not have any time to play video games, and even if they did they would not because it's a waste of time. I wanted to know if these stereotypes were true and if there were any more that I didn't know of. I conducted a survey of 100 people with several questions, both multiple choice and open-ended. The responses are varied; some were expected and some were not. Overall, the results speak for the opinions of the public.

Most of the questions I asked were directed at the person reading them. I first asked if the respondents considered themselves athletes. I made it clear that there were no specific criteria for being an athlete, only the respondents' opinions. 54% of those surveyed responded that they were athletes. There isn't much that can be drawn from this, except that 54 out of 100 people are athletic. I expected that the question I asked next would provide some more understanding, or at least give a good demographic example of from whom I received responses.

The next question I asked was open ended. I told the respondents that if they answered yes to being an athlete they should tell me what sport they play and what their college major is (if they have one). There was absolutely no correlation between what sport the athletes played and what their major was. There wasn't even a single pair of respondents who played the same sport and had the same major. At this point in my research, I wasn't too worried since I did not actually get to my important questions yet.

My third question asked the respondent if he or she ever played a role-playing computer game such as World of Warcraft, Lord of the Rings, or Second Life. It was then clear to me that most people interviewed were not computer game players because 67% responded that they had

never played. But still, there was a solid 23% that had played a role-playing game. This told me that although the majority had never played, there was a population that would be knowledgeable about role-playing games. There was an even smaller population (10%) that said they play these games on occasion. That gave me a total of 33% respondents who have played a role-playing game at least once.

To complement the former question, I asked which game the respondents played the most. 11% responded that they played World of Warcraft the most, which is what I expected because it is probably the best-known role-playing game there is. 24% said they played a role-playing game, but not one the ones that were listed. The people who said they never played a role-playing game added to a percentage of 61. I would assume that many people could conclude that most of the respondents are athletes who do not play computer games. I would further assume that this would mean respondents don't play console games either. I was wrong, however.

When I analyzed the next question's responses, I found that the majority of respondents did, in fact, play console games. 52% said they played more than on occasion while 29% said they only played once in a while. This confused me because I thought that those who did not play computer games would also not play console games. Perhaps console games are more popular because they are made solely for gaming. Computer games could be looked down upon because they were originally made for work. It's also possible that respondents prefer the head-to-head multiplayer facet of console games. When with friends, players can play directly against each other; with computer games, players have to take turns when playing with a friend who is present.

When asked what they considered computer games to be, most responded that they were a waste of time, but they liked them nonetheless. An even amount of respondents answered they were a waste of time, they didn't have time for them, or they were educational and a fun way to meet others. I can see that people recognize the time that is wasted playing computer games even though they are fun. I have personally felt the same way about so many games, and if I had taken the survey I would have responded in exactly the same manner. From the looks of the responses, people are starting to recognize that, as fun as computer games are, they are a waste of time.

My final question was open-ended and asked respondents how playing sports impacted whether or not someone played video games. The purpose of this question was not to see which was the most popular answer but to get a general idea of what opinions were. There were certain answers that were repeated most often, and they are what I believe to be the most relevant and useful ones. Many responded that intense sports like those on the varsity level prevent the playing of video games. These people believe that if someone plays a varsity sport or in a league, they do not have any time to spend on video game playing. Some said that playing sports makes one more likely to buy and play sports video games because they are interested in them. These people also said sports video games help you focus on strategy to better your skill at the sport.

A common response was that playing video games has absolutely nothing to do with playing sports. These people believe that every person is different and no matter which they do (play video games or sports) they could very well do the other. Some cited personal experiences where varsity players loved playing video games during downtime. Others mentioned friends who couldn't spend a moment playing video games because they were so dedicated to sports and reality. A few people sounded very bitter; some said people who play video games are losers and tend to be fat, or that video games are not healthy for the mind.

What I have found by conducting this research is that it is subjective whether or not someone is likely to play video games or computer games. In other words, simply because someone does not play sports does not mean they will play video games. The same goes for the opposite: sports players will not necessarily avoid video games. From a personal standpoint I can tell you that this is true. From the survey, some people have said that they do not play video games but are avid sports players. I am an athlete and I enjoy playing video games on days when I am not able to play sports. However, that does not mean that it is my only hobby on down-days. Unfortunately this research has not provided any definitive answers except for the concept of subjectivity. Perhaps this subjectivity is the only answer possible.