

## Effects of Handheld Video Games on Interpersonal Relationships: A Two-Wave Panel Study on Elementary School Students

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**Abstract :** Handheld video games are popular communication tools among Japanese elementary school students today. This study aims to examine the effects of the use of handheld video games on interpersonal relationships of the students in real and virtual worlds. A two-wave panel survey was conducted for students of ten elementary schools at an interval of approximately six months. The survey questionnaire included questions about the average amount of time spent playing a handheld video game during the past one month, the frequency of communication with players during game play, and the interpersonal relationships, such as the number of real and virtual friends the students have. A multiple regression model was constructed for 324 students to examine causal relationships. The results indicated that the more frequently the students communicated with other players while playing games, the number of the real friends tended to increase. In contrast, no significant effect of the total time spent playing games was found on interpersonal relationships. The findings suggested that communication during game play is an important factor for improving interpersonal relationships of this age group.

**Keywords :** communication, real friend, social adjustment, virtual friend

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