

The Effects of Collaborative Videogame Play on Flow Experience and Mood

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Abstract : Gamers spend over 3 billion hours collectively playing video games a week, which is arguably not nearly enough time to indulge in the many benefits gaming has to offer. Much of the previous research on video gaming is centered on the effects of playing violent video games and the negative impacts they have on the individual. However, there is a dearth of research in the area of non-violent video games, specifically the emotional and cognitive benefits playing non-violent games can offer individuals. Current research in the area of video game play suggests there are many benefits to playing for an individual, such as decreasing symptoms of depression, decreasing stress, increasing positive emotions, inducing relaxation, decreasing anxiety, and particularly improving mood. One suggestion as to why video games may offer such benefits is that they possess ideal characteristics to create and maintain flow experiences, which in turn, is the subjective experience where an individual obtains a heightened and improved state of mind while they are engaged in a task where a balance of challenge and skill is found. Many video games offer a platform for collaborative gameplay, which can enhance the emotional experience of gaming through the feeling of social support and social inclusion. The present study was designed to examine the effects of collaborative gameplay and flow experience on participants' perceived mood. To investigate this phenomenon, an in-between subjects design involving forty participants were randomly divided into two groups where they engaged in solo or collaborative gameplay. Each group represented an even number of frequent gamers and non-frequent gamers. Each participant played 'The Lego Movie Videogame' on the Playstation 4 console. The participant's levels of flow experience and perceived mood were measured by the Flow State Scale (FSS) and the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS). The following research hypotheses were investigated: (i.) participants in the collaborative gameplay condition will experience higher levels of flow experience and higher levels of mood than those in the solo gameplay condition; (ii.) participants who are frequent gamers will experience higher levels of flow experience and higher levels of mood than non-frequent gamers; and (iii.) there will be a significant positive relationship between flow experience and mood. If the estimated findings are supported, this suggests that engaging in collaborative gameplay can be beneficial for an individual's mood and that experiencing a state of flow can also enhance an individual's mood. Hence, collaborative gaming can be beneficial to promote positive emotions (higher levels of mood) through engaging an individual's flow state.

Keywords : collaborative gameplay, flow experience, mood, games, positive emotions

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