The Impact of Video Game Addiction in the Workplace

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ABSTRACT

There are extensive studies about video game addiction. However, empirical research on this topic in a workplace context is rare. The purpose of this study, is to empirically test how video game addiction affects organizational behaviors and how to attenuate this effect. The SEM analysis of survey data from office workers in South Korea found that both workplace bullying and abusive supervision induces video game addiction in employees, and that employees’ video game addiction increases with both work-to-family conflicts and family-to-work conflicts. Furthermore, this study specifically found that the strength of the indirect effect of video game addiction between workplace bullying and work-family conflicts depends on the worker’s perceived organizational supports (POS). POS attenuates the negative impacts of workplace bullying and abusive supervision. These results are meaningful because this is the first study to identify the dynamic mediating impact of video game addiction in workplace.

KEYWORDS

Abusive Supervision, Perceived Organizational Support, Video Game Addiction, Work-Family Conflict, Workplace Bullying

INTRODUCTION

Today, a variety of video games has successfully launched with innovative game-related technologies. Video games are popular leisure activities, and an interactive video game can provide a number of opportunities for competitive and cooperative play (Williams, Yee, & Caplan, 2008). However, video games easily result in an addictive tendency to play habitually (La Rocco, House, & French, 1980; Lemmens, Valkenburg, & Peter, 2009). Video game use may assume the form of out-of-control behavior. Heavy use of video games has been classified as problematic and addictive (LaRose, 2010).

Most studies have argued that video game use leads to pathological signs that are psychologically related to addictive disorder symptoms (Kuss & Griffiths, 2012; Petry, 2012). This new diagnosis only refers to gaming and not to other Internet-related problems, as most research has focused on gaming specifically. However, some other studies have argued that the addictive use of video games and other Internet applications like social media differ from each other theoretically (Young, Pistner, & O’Mara, 1999). The dramatic increase of game users, fostered by the technological revolution in

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games, has given rise to problematic issues like game addiction. This has occurred throughout society and expanded to all users—children, teenagers, and adults.

Interestingly, there is a huge body of research about game addiction in children, teenagers, and even adults, but there are not sufficient academic research studies that empirically tests employees’ game addiction and its impact in the workplace. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine organizational behaviors related to video game addiction. The first step is to investigate organizational factors that encourage video game addiction. Next, we investigate how video game addiction influences employees’ organizational and social attitudes. Finally, this study identifies significant factors for managing video game addiction in the workplace.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND & HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Antecedents of Video Game Addiction

In general, the literature’s conclusions on video game addiction can be categorized into the three angles of a classic addiction triangle: game-related, environmental, and personality factors (Küffner, Metzner, & Bihringer, 2006). In game-related factors, extensive time spent gaming was identified as a risk factor for video game addiction (Rehbein, Kleimann, & Mccoli, 2010). Addicted people usually play games when they are experiencing personal failures. Among the personality-based factors, there is robust evidence that men have a higher risk for developing video game addiction (Mentzoni, Brunborg, Molde, Myrseth, Skouverøe, Hetland, & Pallesen, 2011). Among potential environmental factors, most addicted people lack successful experiences in real-life (Rehbein et al., 2010), and they experience little parental engagement, high video games use by parents, and the divorce or separation of parents (Batthyány, Müller, Benker, & Wölfling, 2009). Considering the context of this study—the workplace—environmental factors are most pertinent to our study. Thus, we focused our attention on environmental factors at work that evoke video game addiction.

The literature about problematic issues in the workplace has identified workplace bullying and abusive supervision as two antecedents of video game addiction in general. Workplace bullying can be conducted by more than one person, while abusive supervision is perpetrated by a boss. Transactional stress model argues that the nature and severe level of emotional reactions following exposure to workplace bullying and abusive supervision are functions of the dynamic interactions between the nature of the event, individual appraisal methods, and coping processes (Lazarus, 1999; Zapf, & Einarsen, 2003). Both workplace bullying and abusive supervision are characterized by a prolonged exposure to interpersonal actions of a negative nature with which the target cannot cope. These are likely to be highly stressful situations characterized by the absence of control. In the context of video game addiction, users can develop an addiction to playing video games because they are trying to satisfy their biopsychological needs (Griffiths, 1996).

Specifically, workplace bullying is defined as situations in which individuals believe that other persons have subjected them to negative acts persistently over a period of time in a situation where the individuals targeted for bullying have difficulty defending themselves (Einarsen, 2005). This definition reveals the key elements of workplace bullying: negativity, persistence, duration, and an imbalance of power. Since the rise of the incidence of workplace bullying, much research has been conducted to prove its negative consequences (Astrauskaite, Perminas, & Kern, 2010; Hogh, Mikkelsen, & Hansen, 2011). These studies showed that exposure to bullying may have highly harmful effects on the mental health of target employees. Yet, these studies also demonstrate that some people exhibit moderate levels of stress, like depression. Stress from workplace bullying may intensify individuals’ undesirable emotions. This then leads to engaging in addictive video game play, as a tool for relieving their dysphoric mood states. Consequently, when game users repeat the pattern of relieving bad moods by playing video games, it increases the psychological dependency level on video game. Accordingly, the following hypotheses have been established:
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