



Bergamo, 22/10/2023

REVIEW

Of the member of the dissertation council for the dissertation of Glinkina S. Liubov on the topic: "Psychological factors influencing preference between types of computer games and involvement in them in adolescence and early adulthood", submitted for the degree of Candidate of Science in Psychology in the scientific specialty 5.3.7. Developmental psychology

The dissertation "Psychological factors influencing preference between types of computer games and involvement in them in adolescence and early adulthood" by Glinkina S. Liubov presents a study on the concept of involvement in video games, focusing on the distinction between multiple types of involvement/passion towards ludic interactive media beyond the concept of addiction. More, the dissertation provides new theoretical background to distinguish different types (genres) of video games based on content and gameplay characteristics. The empirical study addresses personality traits, demographic characteristics and multiple psychological states (e.g., stress, crisis experiences) as predictors of preferences towards video games and of types of involvement in video games. Finally, the study provides information about both adolescent and early adult video game players' characteristics compared with data from the general Russian population.

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Overall, the thesis offers useful data as well as rich theoretical suggestions related to its topics of interest. Below I provide brief resumes and comments about the chapters of the thesis and conclude with my opinion about the main limitations and main strengths of the empirical work and of the thesis as a whole.

The first chapter begins with a well-written introduction on the concept of “game”, and makes use of a number of erudite sources to identify the main aspects of the complex topic: important themes such as games as escapism from reality and games as an experiential tool to learn the rules of society are mentioned. The second paragraph introduces the concept of virtuality to approach the main object of the research, namely videogames; this part is short and mostly based on classical sources, yet it is acceptable as it deals with a secondary topic for the present thesis. The third paragraphs provides an appreciable review of the contributions focused on defining and classifying video games. The main pertinent sources are cited and well explained. This leads to highlight the complexity in classifying video games in modern times. Then, the thesis proposes a classification of video games based on two main dimensions (presence/absence of moral choice X presence/absence of a main character). This part seem adequately convincing giving the complexity of the topic.

The second part of the first chapter deals with the main theoretical constructs that will guide the empirical research. One of the main tenets of the thesis is that “involvement” in video games needs broader conceptualization beyond the concept of addiction: while video games addiction itself still needs to be fully understood by psychological research, it is also necessary to identify non-pathological modalities by which gamers could develop profound involvement in computer-driven ludic activities. Based on scientific literature, the chapter identifies a number of factors involved in preferences for computer games (according to the classification proposed previously) and of different types of involvement: in particular, the psychological constructs of flow, stress and crisis experiences, self-concept and personality are introduced.

The second chapter of the thesis includes the methodology of the empirical study. The chapter begins by identifying a number of main research objectives and specific research hypotheses, overall focused on:

- (1) the predictors of the preference towards video game types/genres;
- (2) the predictors of different types of involvement in video games (namely addiction, usage of games to manage emotions, identification with the character, communication with other players and flow state);

(3) the identification of the psychological characteristics of highly-involved video game players (in terms of personality, lived crisis experiences and stress).

The second part of the chapter presents the sample of the study and then the numerous self-report tools employed. The instruments are well presented and their inclusion in the study is adequately justified according to the aims and the literature.

The third chapter presents the results of the study, which are well explained and organized according to the main objectives and specific hypotheses. The statistical analyses are overall appropriate.

The fourth chapter features the discussion of results according to objectives and hypotheses. This part is written with appreciable attention to the available literature, emphasizing accordance or discordance with results and theories from available sources. Directions for future research are present in the conclusion section but underdeveloped. In addition, for future publications it is advisable to give more attention to identification of limitations of the study and practical recommendations.

Overall, the thesis presents an interdisciplinary theoretical and empirical work that could certainly set the basis for useful and innovative research on video games playing and on the factors that drive both adult and young users towards the development of potentially problematic involvement as well as sincere passion. As noted in the dissertation, this is certainly relevant for improving the precision of diagnosis of problematic video gaming and addiction, possibly even in terms of early identification and therefore prevention.

As general comments,

Main limitations of the study are:

- It should be considered that the sample is on the low side; results of predictive analyses should be interpreted with caution, especially in terms of explained variance;
- The thesis presents one big study with a considerable number of objectives, hypotheses and variables; suggestions for future research would be to design smaller studies targeting specific hypotheses, to improve explainability value and manageability of data. Qualitative research could be taken into consideration to deepen the lived experience of gameplay in different contexts;
- While the empirical research considers many important constructs, in my opinion, the “great absent” is motivation. There is relevant literature on video games and self-determination theory (i.e., the subtypes of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations) that could

give important information in order to understand different types of involvement in video games, and also dedicated tools such as the GAMS (Gaming Motivation Scale) that could be employed.

Main strengths of the study and of the thesis as a whole are:

- The theoretical part provides a commendable work in terms of reviewing the literature on the complex topic of identification and classification of video games; it also proposes an innovative form of classification that appears effective as a guide for empirical research as well as practical implications (e.g., video games design and marketing);
- The interdisciplinary nature of the work is a plus. The thesis features contents from philosophy and games studies that could open to collaboration with other fields of research and improve feasibility of practical recommendations to the market;
- The empirical work is based on a notably deep analysis of the available literature which appears inter-disciplinary in nature and shows that the candidate has developed a thorough expertise on the topic, both at the philosophical and at the scientific level;
- The methodology of the study highlights that the candidate has developed the ability to design scientific research in terms of multivariate modeling and complex explanation of psychological phenomena;
- The results of the study (especially those related to the identification and prediction of different types of involvement) are useful to help addressing real-world, pragmatic problems. While the candidate expresses more of a clinical psychology sensitivity (as she focuses on providing information to distinguish addiction from other types of involvement and therefore to aid the precision of mental health diagnoses), it could be interesting and valuable to explore the utility of results for the industry, namely guiding the design and marketing of video games. Indeed, the results of the empirical research could inform the development of tools that video game developers could use to profile gamers and create products tailored on customers' needs.

In conclusion,

The dissertation of Glinkina S. Liubov on the topic: "Psychological factors influencing preference between types of computer games and involvement in them in adolescence and early adulthood" meets the basic requirements established by Order No.11181/1 dd. 19.11.2021 "On the procedure for awarding academic degrees at St. Petersburg State University". The applicant Glinkina S. Liubov deserves to be awarded the academic degree of candidate of science of

Psychology in the scientific specialty 5.3.7. Developmental psychology. No violations of paragraphs 9 and 11 of the specified Order have been detected.

Member of the Dissertation Council

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stefano Triberti', written in a cursive style.

Stefano Triberti

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