

Culture-building and Promoting National Productions in the Scope of Computer Games

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, computer games are considered as current significant media which, on the side of the Internet and television, play a vital role in transmitting the concepts and values. Thus, games, based on the reinforcement of religious and national identity, moral and religious teachings, and educating the Islamic life style should be produced, in addition, children, teens and youth should be made aware of the impact of the western games created with their anti-Islamic goals in line with promulgating the western life style. In this article, the national foundation of computer games, its goals and duties, culture building and promotion of national productions were first investigated, then, the role of computer games, its components based on religious teachings, its positive and negative consequences, however, the parental and also cultural authorities' supervision role with a look at the recent status of the computer games both in Iran and in the Western games with their anti-Islamic goals, also, in line with promulgating the western life style, were examined. Moreover, in this article, some religious and cultural experts in the field were interviewed whose views were inserted in the paper.

1. Introduction

In today's world, computer games have got a higher position than that of hobbies, besides, they have been recognized as important and strategic media which transfer their producers' concepts into the homes and minds of audience (Barzgar, 2011). It is also predicted that computer games will become the dominant medium in the world by the year 2020 (Minai, 2012). The national computer games law, on the one hand, acts as a barrier to potentially harmful phenomenon of cultural inroad, and on the other hand is considered as a factor for culture-building and also for making a bed for the investigation of the Islamic culture alternatives and religious style. However, they bring about readiness to encounter the different events. The research method in this article is descriptive-analytical while being of an applied type.

2. Theoretical Bases of the Research

2.1. Computer game and educating religious tenets and teachings

One of the significant parental duties is to religiously educate their children. A key principle in computer games to which parents should attach a great importance is that parents should degrade and close themselves to the child level and indicate a childish behavior while being pre-occupied with the game. Imam Ali (a. s.) says: whoever has a child must degrade himself to a childish level. Also, if parents put aside their parental prestige, order and discipline over the minutes of playing with the child and behave just like children, there will be no harm to their personality, maintaining that such behaviors have been seen in the teachings of the Imams (Sandra, 2000).

Hence, it is quite necessary for teachers to give a morally effective instruction to their students, be fully aware of their religious responsibility, and make a serious attempt in line with the education of their children' faith and ethics. Nevertheless, some parents do not pay any attention to their children' religious education, however, there are other parents who view their children' religious breeding but they do not apply any appropriate method, often teaching moral and religious concepts similar to the way applied to adults. One topic with which both parents and instructors should be familiar is the growth and elevation of the religious thought and quality of eliciting them from the religious subjects. It is, undoubtedly, possible to search for the infrastructure of the religious thought of youth and teens from their childish sensation and apparently superficial understandings. According to Rital (1996), the world of child

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is the world of evident and tangible things whose most period of time is formed by games. Therefore, if we want to teach such abstract units as God, death, resurrection, rewards and punishment of deeds to children, we should perform it based on tangible characteristics, and teach these concepts within the framework of the childish games and tales.

2.2. National Foundation for the Computer Games

Having been approved by the cultural revolution supreme council, session 584, dated 22/6/2006, the computer games are positively viewed since they play a significant role in influencing culture, and also in the growth and genesis of the children's scientific-cultural personality. They are also effective in terms of their educational value and filling part of the leisure time of the society's different age groups. Thus, it is of high necessity to carefully plan and produce new and appropriate cultural productions, and to attach a great importance to the recognition of the elite stratum. Considering this type of necessity, the national foundation for the computer games was established under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance with the purpose of supporting cultural and artistic productions including video and computer games as appropriate input for the children.

2.3. Purpose of Establishing the Foundation

- Explaining, boosting and promulgating cultural basics and the Islamic-Iranian identity via this industry with a particular look at the teens and youth.
- Supporting existing capacities of the country's cultural productions industry aimed at localizing industry, and boosting supervision and control of the process of production, provision, importation, preparation, proliferation and distribution of various kinds of both video and computer games.
- Trying in line with the provision of technical knowledge and its related facilities and equipment in the entire grounds coupled with both software and hardware template.

2.4. Duties of the Foundation

- Provision and arrangement of policies and strategies in the field of computer games, and its presentation to the supreme council of cultural revolution with the purpose of having massive design and planning of these cultural products in different recreational, educational dimensions.
- Applying country's both the internal and external capacities with the aim of promoting video and computer games industry.
- Compiling necessary standards so as to examine the quality and quantity of the imports and exports of computer games productions.
- Trying to provide material and spiritual rights of the producers and consumers of the computer games.
- Planning and supporting the fulfillment of needed research and educational programs in order to reinforce the scientific, theoretical, and applied basics, and emphasize the Islamic-Iranian identity of video and computer games.
- Providing appropriate ground so as to increase the growth and prosperity of the youth's talent and creativity in the game and hobby industry.
- Holding, supporting and attending meetings and festivals on the national, regional and universal games.
- Encouraging sound scientific, technical, artistic and cultural among those actively involved in game and hobby industry to improve the qualitative and quantitative growth of such industry.
- Trying to develop international cooperation in general and cooperating with the Islamic nations in the field of computer games industry in particular.

2.5. The Role of Computer Games in the Cultural Civil Defense

The virtual space dominating the computer games enables the individual to temporarily separate from his real world and, instead, plunge into the template of personalities that are not possible in the real world for him to think of. Hayakawa argues that: "this subject that we all have only one life is of no reality, claiming that we can experience, in different ways, much more varieties of life that we tend to have through the application of the computer games. To Shahvardi (2009), the computer games manufacturing companies exploit such a psychological impact and fix their determined concepts in the minds of their audience by including influential policies and messages in their computer games. From way back, games have been taken into account as a common method of education, however, with this respect, Plato states that in order to build a utopia it is very necessary for teachers and parents to closely control and supervise the use of childish games right from the early childhood. Moreover, games are critically significant since they help to recognize the moral and personality characteristics, capacities, in addition, strong and weak points of children influencing their behaviors, therefore, the kind of game can considerably change their moral attitude and behavior (Sharifi, 2010). The multi-billion dollar trade market of the computer games has massively attracted its target audience and deeply dominated the morality, in addition, its advancement in creating more attraction in the games so as to make much more sale, has resulted in a galloping representation of such culturally harmful components as cruelty, sexual relations, drugs use, and so on. Freedom and cruelty in the computer games makes the topic clear that except a small number of computer games which are invested with sports and educational content, the rest has chosen the cruelty as an exiting background of the computer games. According to Azari (2009), such aspects as boosting the sensation of aggression, isolationism, mind laziness and academic drop are among the negative effects of the computer games. Although this type of attitude towards computer games maybe worrying for some, its denial seems to be absurd, nevertheless, we should accept it as a reality and try to neutralize the destructive effects of the computer games (Barzgar, 2011). However, this challenge can turn into an opportunity for those trustees of the affair in order to design domestic computer games with a particular look at the national-religious values with the aim of directing the minds of audience towards hope, truth and clarity.

2.6. Components for Use in the Computer Games Based on Culture-Building and National Production

- Boosting national identity: the player must have sufficient recognition of the country's epic and historical legends so that he can apply them in different sections of the game in order to obtain the necessary points.
- Boosting religious identity: the player must study the religious patterns which are trained in easy language at the beginning of the game in order to decode its messages over the game and gain point.

- Enemy recognition: following this, the player considers satellite networks, porn websites, anti-custom fashions, and so on as negative factors, knowing that he loses point or falls into their trap if he gets close to them.
- Personality recognition: having been familiar with unknown characters, the player investigates the resources at his disposal so as to assess his qualification in giving any direction.

2.7. Computer Games with the Western Culture

The Western cultural productions have entered the markets of the Islamic countries in order to realize their own pre-determined goals. Following the application of such productions, the individual gets bored with his own culture and identity and accepts America and other such countries as the competent empire of his novel world imagining it as the juice of good forces of the world. One of these influential cultural productions is the influx of computer games that has recently targeted the social capital of the Islam (Bagherzadeh, 2011). Nowadays, theories are issued in the western media space with the purpose of showing a rough face of the Islam conveying this thought that the Hidden Imam (the Promised Mahdi) is the one who brings and resuscitates such a rough religion. In a film of Noster Adamos, America stands against the Islam, and the Promised Mahdi is illustrated with an Arabic cloth who does every work only by pressing a button causing a lot of bloodshed and leaving behind a large number of people widow and orphan (Shafie, 2006). The abundance of war and combat games with a basis of Vietnam Wars, the Persian Gulf War, and the Iraq War is a conventionalized content of the historical authenticity and geographical realism in the discrimination of race. Most people criticize the integration of the game industry with the US army resulting in such games as America's army, 'Coma war', 'Full Spectrum Warrior', 'SOCOM': US Navy Seals. These productions have their own impact on the war decisions and also on the battle field. In fact, the youth, amid the war ethics that whether they should fight or not, and for what reason they should fight, get confused. In some games, African-American characters are shown as champions who speak sarcastically and offensively, however, these characters behave in a cruel way in terms of physical features. Issues pertinent to illustrating the blacks in special conditions are seen in such street games as 'NBA Street', 'NFL Street', and 'Street Hopes'. Games such as football and basketball which are usually shown in the black slum locations indicate the sensation of championship of the black while signifying their poor style of living together with their racial inferiority. Also, such exhibitions, weaken the power and capacity of the local towns while emphasizing the blacks' power of championship. Therefore, these pictures illustrate this image in the minds of the public that slum life, being black and over-playing, have relationship with each other. In addition, slum settlement areas circled by chain fences, playgrounds, stained and dilapidated gates with no net, walls with plenty of writings on, empty buildings, and the point that the blacks only play and never tend to work, are all exposed to the audience in the virtual space. The GTA: San Andreas still shows the previous patterns of this game. In the earlier samples of this game, the champion was Italian-American, while now it has been replaced by an African-American one who is in charge of directing the champion. This game changes the place and the black's color into cliché. This research, in fact, connects the criminality with being black. Such a game became example for making other games like 'True Crime' and 'Other Narrative'. Sometimes, in games, places and areas of the African-American characters are shown as humble and small, besides, the type of African music and pictures applied, signify the sensation of inferiority. Of course, all these are made in America. Such productions cover the concept that their culture is different. The True Crime is a game that illustrates different aspects of racial discrimination including the 'Hip Hop' culture, however, in places like 'China Town' where people of different cultural backgrounds live together whose cultures are humiliated in the virtual space. In many games, the infernal human beings in the form of terrorist groups, try to seize the power and destroy all divine forces, but you, as a savior and expert spy, or as an international police (mostly soldiers from the US and British armies) start fighting the enemies of the humanity. Games such as 'Lethal Weapon', 'Task Force', and 'Return to Volfen Stain Castle' convey the same content. Now, the west attempts to justify its current aggressive policies in the international arena. It has recently chosen some goals like combating international terrorism, fighting the terrorist groups such as 'Al-Qaeda', and countering the world dictatorships, for instance, Saddam Hussein. This trend was pursued more hastily after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the US military and economic landmarks, for instance, in the game of 'Delta Force', you are commanded by the US to fight the terrorist groups throughout the universe. In part of this game, when you enter the terrorists' camp, you will see the picture of the 'Hamas' leader, the late Sheikh Yassin, as assassinated earlier by the Israeli agents, on the wall, or in the game of Delta Force, you enter 'Khouzestan' in order to fight the terrorists while seeing terrorists with ugly and cruel faces painted on the wall. They appear in an Arabic cloth and have unshaved beard. Over the recent years, a game which is usable in the Atari systems, has been designed titled as 'Mahdi'. The main title of this game is the "Persian Gulf Inferno" during which a black-clad Basiji chants "Mahdi". The exhibition's background is entirely red. Psychologically, the red color signifies cruelty and bloodshed, and the black color is the sign of mourning and hatred. The game champion is an American who is moving in an oil terminal in the Persian Gulf. Some people stand against him and decide to kill him. The main feature of the people is saying the phrases "the God is great" and "there is no other than the Almighty" which are taken into account as the fundamental slogans of the Muslims in general and of the Basiji combatants in particular. The game player should start shooting when he hears the voice "Oh Mahdi" otherwise he will be killed himself. According to Pavlov's famous principle of conditioning, whoever in the world, from any race, does this games ten times, becomes conditioned due to the grave psychological associations, getting angry and abhorrent of the slogan "Oh Mahdi" when hearing it, thus, this anger and hatred results in shooting. This game normally ends with the death of the "Mahdi" chanting 'Hezbollah' combatants and the victory of Americans (Mohamadi, 2012). Of the most important games promoting the American life style is the collection of 'Sim's Games'. Over this game, the user can obtain a virtual experience of his ordinary life right from the beginning of being given to birth to the following different phases of life until death. Besides, the user learns daily routine activities such as eating, sleeping, taking a shower, going to work, taking a rest, etc. all and all based on an American life style. Moreover, other socially harmful patterns of behavior like having free relations with both homogeneous and heterogeneous friends and having even free sexual relationships are indirectly taught to the users (Seyyed Hussein, 2012). Another game with a special look at the religious apocalypse, titled as 'Adventurous Sam in the Perspolis' was produced and distributed in the market. In this game, you should first take the role of 'Sam Stone' and go back so as to save the humanity, and fight the 'Satan'. Thus, to fight the Satan, you should enter the 'Perspolis' in which you will see the Satan in the shapes of squash or large scorpions. However, one of these games is the 'Headless Kamikaz'. According to its manufacturing company, it is a creature without head with two bombs in its hands exploding them when it gets close to you. However,

most symbols are related to the Islamic, Arabic, and ancient periods in Iran, for example, you can see ‘religious writings’ on such symbols whose ownership goes to the Imams or the Holy Prophet like “I’m the city of science and Ali is its door”, as you can see it in picture 3, (Haghverdi, 2012).

In other games of this type, a member of the Esmailiate cult (of the Iranian Shiite religion) who is white-clad and has a strong belief in the “Messianism and Mahdaviat”, becomes ready to fight with a sword. In addition, he is a brave and strong man and introduces himself as a devotee with the aim of killing people. An American company of the UB Soft has made this game. The game story’s narration dates back to the 12th century whose theme deals with the crusade (the Promised Magazine, 2010).

Another game of this kind abundantly available in the market, is called “Assassins’ Creed” in which the user must be prepared to kill the Christian leaders of the crusade. You can view, in picture 5, the word “Ali” as it has been skillfully used in this game.

There is a most popular game titled as “Counter” in which you should go to different countries in order to fight the terrorists. But, as we can see in picture 6, the terrorists appear to bear an Islamic appearance.

In another computer game titled ‘IGI2’ which promotes the Islamophobia and Iranophobia during which the user travels to the other countries to fight the terrorists. In a case of this kind, the individual must go to Libya to destroy a Libyan terrorist group. During the battle, the sound of the ‘Holy Quran’ is heard and the words of ‘Allah’ and ‘Mohammad is the messenger of God’ have been written in reverse. Picture 7 shows this:

The ‘Battlefield3’ is a computer game made in the American company of EA in 2002 in which a US navy sergeant plans to fight the terrorist groups. To do this, a military group known as the ‘Popular Liberation and Resistance’ group goes to the Iraqi city of Soleymania. Later, the sergeant and his team move towards Tehran (the capital city of Iran) in order to arrest ‘Al-Bashir’. In picture 8 below, attacking Iran and the Milad Tower are shown.

‘Angry Bird Space’ is one of the most popular computer games in Iran which is used by many children, teens and youth. During this game the angry birds are thrown away. As illustrated in picture 9, famous Iranian symbols, the map of Iran, and the Milad Tower are the target points to be attacked.

The game ‘Resident Evil 5’ deals with shooting at the Holy Quran in which the existence of the Quran signifies that your enemies study this book. As shown in picture 10, insulting the sacred things, and introducing the Muslims as terrorist has become an ordinary and common approach in the western mass media, cyber space and computer games.

Recently, some computer games are produced with an American or Israeli content in which shape, form, and content all signify and convey the message of Islamophobia. Children become deeply engaged in the cruelty of computer games. Repetition or familiarity with such games can unavoidably inject some destructive norms of the western culture into the minds of the children (Motahari, 2007).

2.8. Negative Outcomes of the Computer Games

- Covert and Overt Functions of the Computer Games:

Psychologically, each game can have either covert or overt functions. The overt functions of the games are recreation, hobby, familiarity with concept, and the creation of skill and innovation in children, while its covert functions can be indirectly transferred into the children’s minds through the games’ shape, color, size, design, background, and kind of working.

- Computer Games as the Tools of Cultural Inroad:

Most games are either imported or domestically made as an imitation of their foreign version which gradually affect both the teens’ and youth’ enthusiasm, taste and behavioral norms. If we take a comprehensive look at the educational outcomes of the computer games, we will realize how our teens and youth are terribly influenced by different kinds of counter-values, behavioral patterns, norms, wearing style, make-up style and the western life style in general.

- Computer Games, Violence and Aggression:

The war and combat computer games can result in violence and aggression in teens and youth forming such habits as belligerence and harshness in their developing personality. Moreover, these games familiarize the consumers with the indecent social behaviors like murder, kidnapping, theft and crime, affecting their compatibility and social relations. In fact, the war games convey their content to this sensitive age group in such a way that war becomes hobby, recreation and also playing for them.

- Computer Games and the Transmission of Abnormality and Counter Value:

Although playing has an outstanding role in the child’s socio-cognitive and psychological development, in addition, in boosting its social spirit, no desirable outcome is obtained when it is not compatible with the cultural values and psychological principles. In the Islamic society in which religious beliefs form its cultural infrastructure, and it is hoped that men and women live with chastity and social safety, but what constructive effects and outcomes can such half-naked games have for the child?

2.9. Addiction to Computer Games and Disorder in the Socialization Process

One of the educational, psychical and social outcomes of using computer games is the issue of being addicted to them together with the disorder in the socialization process of the youth and teens. With this respect, the structure of the computer games is designed in a way that the player is just placed in the front of the screening board, interacting with pictures, data and existing information other than with their peers. Therefore, limiting the children’s social relations only to the computer’s screening board coupled with its virtual dummies is equal to their deprivation of having interaction and relations with their playmates, moreover, this results in their addiction to the virtual games causing serious problems on the way of children’s socialization process.

- Presentation of the Immoral Principles:

The presentation of characters with immoral characteristics and unacceptable coverings coupled with the youth’ and teens’ social isolation can lead to the establishment of the negative moral values. Very often, harsh, emotionless and belligerent identities of both men and women are displayed in such games.

- Social Damages:

The exuberant use of the computer games can bring about severe eye damages. Indeed, when using the computer games, some safety regulations and also medical standards should be taken into account, otherwise, users could face such physical harms as optical, skeletal, and central nervous system damages, besides, it can cause cardiac disorders, obesity due to immobility, skin damages, chronic fatigue, gastrointestinal disorders. In addition, this habit can change the body's metabolism.

- **Psychical and Educational harms:**

Since in most of these inappropriate computer games the basic identity is originally belligerent and violent and the user should be constantly involved in fighting the enemy forces so as to enter the following stages, continuity of doing such games makes aggression and violence as an integral part of the children's personality.

- **Isolationism:**

Children's spending too much time playing and watching the computer games has caused them to be socially isolated from their environment and family members. As a result, social and psychical problems come into being for them.

Cultural and Political Incentives:

The virtual world, similar to reality, as shown in these games is so interesting and attractive that the audience is influenced by the beliefs that designers of such games plant in their minds. From the early formation of the video and computer games, political and cultural incentives are integral part of the games (Khorasan Special Issue, Spring, 2009).

2.10. The Parental Role of Supervising the Computer Games

The reality says that the computer games as one of the novel phenomena of human knowledge like other human innovations is endowed with a two-edged blade, one edge is the right usage of games in line with the growth of users, but the other edge deals with the wrong application of the computer games that is, from different aspects, in contrast to individual's moods, in addition, to his cultural and family values. At present, the lack of familiarity with either positive or negative aspects of the computer games is one of the serious problems with which most families are facing. In other words, experts in the field share the belief in the lasting impacts of the computer games on children's socio-cognitive and personality development, in reverse, wrongly chosen and applied computer games can bring about destructive and undesirable outcome. One of the parental responsibilities for the control of timing of accomplishing games is to provide appropriate games finely tuned to the age of children, and have a direct supervision and control of both game nets and pseudo-game nets. Families' inattention and parents' lack of familiarity with the content of computer games, game suppliers' abuse of the absence of any supervisory role on the game use, and the game eaters' extreme interest in using these games all and all direct the teens and youth towards mental and social abnormalities. Hence, neglecting one's responsibilities is considered as an unforgivable sin. In the discussion of the formation of persons' verbal and behavioral personality, psychologist have placed a great emphasis on the role of such influential tools as television, book, and press, however, today with the development of the complex world of computer games, warnings against the teens and youth's vulnerability of personality and its potential impact on the whole society have intensified (Keyhan News Paper, 2006). Unlike movies, computer games allow the audience to play a key role in the game other than being the mere viewers, for example, the player may be driving a car, shooting at something, or pursuing somebody (Akhavan et al., 2012).

3. Conclusion

The harms of these games are something pre-determined to spoil their users (children, teens and youth), as enemies of the Islam have always tried to inject their own culture into the minds of mentally and socially developing children. However those producers of both video and computer games keep on creating these culturally destructive productions as input with the purpose of influencing their behavioral patterns and cultural norms. It, indeed, happens since children psychologically develop, and their personal identity forms in the future, as scientific experience shows, based on what they are taught in their childhood. Considering the above-mentioned statements, we have come to the conclusion that computer games are no longer taken into account as tools for the children and teens' recreation and play. However, some of them should be looked upon as a conspiracy against the Islamic thought, thus, it is possible to purposefully counter with such culturally harmful productions by creating appropriate successors to them with a particular look at depth of the national and religious resources. For this purpose, the national foundation for the computer games together with other related institutions can play a vital role in reinforcing the game manufacturing companies and apply effective views of the experts in the field so as to help these companies. Moreover, with due attention to the high spending of time, energy and money, and experts' supervision, the domestically made cultural productions must be endowed with desirable quality, and be suitable successors to the western games. Nevertheless, most of these so-called locally created are mere copies of the western versions (transferring the western culture in Persian), are created with low quality in color and graphic features coupled with not being capable of meeting the needs of audience, and are delivered to customers at terribly high prices in comparison with their western counterpart. Besides, the parental preventative actions together with authorities' close supervision results in the improvement of national productions in general and computer games in particular, therefore, our life properties that are undoubtedly our children can develop just in accordance with the Islamic life style and cultural norms.

4. Suggestions

At last, suggestions with the purpose of improving the quality of national productions in the field of computer games, and promoting culture-building, are made as follow:

- A special institution should be established so as to explain necessary criteria for the creation of computer games, in addition, to closely supervise the productions and also their imports.

- With due attention to the importance of establishing the identity and game's role in forming it, the policy makers should focus their care and attention on the styles through which national and religious concepts and values can be effectively transferred into the minds of children, teens and youth.
- Producing and creating of games is originally a cultural prophecy other than a business one or a way of earning income, thus, it is very necessary for all game manufacturing companies to make use of the views of educational and psychological experts and also industrial designers for the design and production of different kinds of the computer games.
- The standardization centers along with the Ministry of Culture should investigate either domestically made or imported games.
- Experts and university researchers should form periodical seminars with the purpose of studying and examining the computer games, and informing the users of educational, cultural and social functions and outcomes.
- Special publications on the computer games industry are needed to be issued so as to introduce the latest scientific and industrial studies and developments about games with the aim of raising the producers', suppliers, teachers and parents' level of awareness.
- Cultural institutions together with producers are suggested to carefully supervise the process of creating the computer games, besides, public authorities and computer game managers endowed with state financial support conclude with the improvement of the country's game industry.
- Promulgating domestically made computer games and trying to hold provincial game exhibitions.
- Appropriately compiling the age and content classification system for the computer games, investigating the market situation of games and taking action with offenders in the computer games market.
- Using ideas with religious and Islamic basis in the computer games.
- Arranging computer games competitions based on the national productions and culture-building of the religious teachings.
- Selecting appropriate content of the game: if, for example, pictures and titles on the game package illustrate cases of violence and sexual topics, it is, however, likely to find such similar cases in the film itself.
- The selected games should get the player involved either in searching for the strategies or in making decisions over the game which are normally more sophisticated than merely kicking, running or jumping.

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