## ENGINEERING AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

ISSN: 2349-7793 Impact Factor: 6.876., Volume: 18 Issue: 02 in February 2024

## **EFFECTS OF THE VIRTUAL WORLD ON HUMANS**

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**Annotation:** the Virtual world does not remain without showing its influence on humans. Virtual reality is not another technology of the present, but a new "aspect" for people, which, by changing something, we can imagine and change our thoughts about ourselves. This, in small manifestations, can affect us in our control of ourselves and the world, losing the difference between the virtual world and the real world. VR technology can also have psychological consequences. When we show ourselves in the Virtual world, our feelings and perceptions of ourselves can change. In addition, VR technology can also change our own social relationships, as we experience and can influence interactions with other people in the virtual world.

Keywords: Virtual world, human, technology, computer games, virtual reality.

The world around us is constantly evolving. In the past, people speculated that we would have flying cars, hoverboards, and interplanetary travel. While some of these future-world predictions have come true, few could have anticipated the expansion of humanity into the virtual realm. As more companies invest in new technology, virtual reality is becoming increasingly commonplace and advanced in people's lives. Virtual reality offers an escape from our chaotic, ever-changing world. This technology has logically advanced significantly, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, when people lacked normal access to the real world. On the surface, virtual reality might seem like a gamechanger, but this escape might not be as sweet as it appears. Augmented reality experiences introduce a new kind of uncertainty that can be problematic. The uncertainty created by virtual reality can be harmful to our emotional and physical well-being.

Virtual reality might appear as a new technology, but it has been around for some time. It continues to be popular worldwide, primarily in the entertainment industry. However, companies like Meta and Microsoft are looking to bring their virtual reality platforms into commercial and military domains. Apple has recently released the Apple Vision Pro, a high-end virtual and augmented reality headset with substantial computing power. With these new advancements, virtual reality is starting to gain traction in fields such as medicine and healthcare due to its benefits in the workplace. Although virtual reality brings many things to the table, such as the ability to perform surgical operations without physical bodies of people or animals, its harm could outweigh its benefits. Despite its many positive aspects, the risks of virtual reality are very real. Virtual reality creates uncertainty because it allows users to temporarily detach from the physical world around them. This leads to the uncertainty of not knowing which world is real or simulated. Anyone who has experienced virtual reality firsthand understands how alluring and astonishing it can be. When trapped in the virtual world, people can become deeply attached to it and forget the real world they live in. This also creates a problematic experience when adjusting to the real world.

| 11 | ISSN 2349-7793 (online), Published by INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN<br>COMMERCE, IT, ENGINEERING AND SOCIAL SCIENCES.,<br>under Volume: 18 Issue: 02 in February-2024<br>https://www.gejournal.net/index.php/IJRCIESS        |
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About four years ago, when I first used virtual reality, the technology was quite good but, of course, far from perfect. I used Google Cardboard, which seemed like the greatest new achievement in technology at that time. Compared to the new Meta Quest 3, Google Cardboard now just looks like a cardboard box. This comparison really shows how much virtual reality technology has changed in such a short time. When I used this new technology, I truly felt its development. During my experience with the new Meta Quest 3, I was completely amazed by the new world I was in. I thought I could easily distinguish between the real and virtual worlds, but as soon as I put on the headset, I was fully immersed. It felt like the emotional information from reality was fading into the background, and the bombardment of virtual information took over. The boundary between reality and virtual reality completely disappeared, and I became firmly convinced that I was experiencing the new world I was in.

Virtual reality involves computer games that are played by both children and adults. Children start playing games from a very young age: as early as three or four years old. It even seems strange that five-year-olds can discuss computers with a level of insight; they are often more adept, calm, and confident at the computer than adults are. Just as reading books is routine for us, sitting in front of a computer is equally routine for them.

What risks and challenges await us when we play computer games? First and foremost, it is important to understand what direction a child might be led in when they are immersed in a computer environment. Will it be an aggressive or a humanitarian approach to the world?

Computers first appeared in specialized rooms where highly skilled specialists began working. They primarily dealt with defense and other research issues, often working on problems related to mathematics, logic, and rational ideas. No one imagined that people would use computers for simple purposes, such as games. The term "computer games" might have seemed absurd. Nevertheless, serious, cold scientists who once occupied these spaces have been replaced by excited, curious children playing games.

Today, computer games are not just games but have become promoters of culture, knowledge, education, and upbringing. While games may not resemble stages, exhibitions, or book pages, they express modern spirituality, moral characteristics, thoughts, dreams, and imaginations in much the same way.

Like any cultural creation, computer games create certain opportunities for self-expression and limit others. Whereas previously a writer or screenwriter would create one version of a storyline, now it can be developed in various directions through computer tools. Similarly, while a composer might have written down one version of a melody, today's producers can perform a theme in 5-6 different variations. In the past, a painter was limited to a static canvas; now, paintings can depict moving clouds, flowing rivers, and express movement. Due to computers and information technology, technical limitations in all fields are gradually diminishing.

Computer games provide people with the opportunity to enter worlds of imagination and dreams. There was never before such freedom to deeply immerse oneself and participate in a world that was never real. The interactivity of computer games demonstrates a superiority over cinema, theater, and books: games involve collaborative activity where the player cannot remain a passive

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observer but must actively influence the unfolding events. While sports competitions also encourage collaborative activity, the freedom to express oneself is constrained by a complex system of prohibitions. Computer games, however, express "Personal Activity" and sometimes free from constraints like etiquette rules.

There are other methods of creating a sense of presence in a virtual world outside of computers. These are numerous and have become a national issue in some countries. Today, there are educational computer games designed to prevent the potential negative impact of computer use on the mind and positively influence the education of future generations. While computer fantasies disrupt the human body less, eye strain and the harm of a sedentary lifestyle are still clearly noticeable. Managing this is easier; players can choose not to look at the screen or close their eyes whenever they wish.

Human perception results from emotional inputs and cognitive processes, and VR technology can profoundly affect this outcome by introducing stimuli that challenge emotional systems. The visual system, in particular, is highly sensitive to the manipulation of VR environments, and users typically rely on their vision to navigate and interact within these immersive virtual environments. Therefore, it is crucial to consider human perception in the development of virtual reality technologies, which often create real 3D environments that can be studied in real-time. Additionally, audio and haptic feedbacks are of significant importance. Spatial audio is used to simulate "real soundscapes," helping users navigate within the virtual environment and locate objects or other users. Haptic feedback creates sensations such as vibrations, simulating the touch of virtual objects. Although VR environments often prioritize visual and auditory methods, incorporating other senses like touch and even smell can create a more holistic and immersive experience and improve the overall perception of the virtual world.

Virtual reality (VR), one of the most fascinating technologies of our time, refers to a fully simulated reality created by computer systems using digital formats. The use of VR in our daily lives has had remarkable social and psychological impacts, including on our perceptions of family, religion, personal experiences, and more. There is no doubt that VR offers immediate virtual gratification, but it is not yet of immediate political, social, or legal significance. In fact, there is no "law" or "order" in the virtual world, and people can live as they wish. But does this affect our behavior or interactions in the real world?

Psychological theories suggest that encountering virtual counterparts can lead to specific consequences. According to Albert Bandura's classic "social learning theory," developed in the late 1970s, people tend to imitate the behaviors they observe in others. For example, a teenager might learn the behaviors of a group of friends who enjoy interacting with them. Indeed, researchers have shown that the more similar a target is to an observer, the more likely the observer is to imitate that target. Moreover, seeing oneself perform actions in virtual reality can have a significant impact on one's behavior and memory, as virtual actions are controlled by computer programmers and animators.

The popular TV series "Black Mirror" features several episodes dedicated to the psychological consequences of virtual reality. In particular, the recent episode discusses a time when people become increasingly distinguished by their virtual "avatars" and their ratings, similar to the ratings given to an Uber driver after a ride. Imagine a future where thousands of experiences occur virtually every

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day. Consider the first awkward heartbeat after waking up from a vivid dream or a conversation with someone who has dreamt of you. Whether observing oneself in virtual reality during exercise and weight loss or supporting products in VR, this technology's ability to alter our self-perceptions and beliefs makes "virtual reality" feel more real than "reality."

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| 14 | ISSN 2349-7793 (online), Published by INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN<br>COMMERCE, IT, ENGINEERING AND SOCIAL SCIENCES.,<br>under Volume: 18 Issue: 02 in February-2024<br>https://www.gejournal.net/index.php/IJRCIESS        |
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