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Editorial: Current trends in research on how video games support or limit social-emotional learning

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Editorial on the Research Topic

[Current trends in research on how video games support or limit social-emotional learning](#)

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is a concept that has gained increased popularity in recent years. It involves managing emotions and learning how they influence our personal and professional contexts. Understanding emotions allows us to establish positive relationships and make responsible decisions. The presence of emotions in a predominantly technological context like ours might seem antithetical; however, our interaction with technology also involves emotions, our ability to learn social-emotional skills, and the consideration of computers as social actors (Nass and Moon, 2000) or animated pedagogical agents (Castro-Alonso et al., 2021). Video games stand out among the technologies humans interact with because they are objects where multiple languages converge (graphics, sound, narrative, interactivity, etc.). Hence, various studies (Johannes et al., 2021; Plass and Hovey, 2022) highlight how video games positively influence players' emotional wellbeing.

Video games offer players immersive, interactive, and challenging environments that enable the development of social-emotional skills. In this regard, different strategies in video games allow players to progress and explore the narrative of their characters, including decision-making and coping with complex situations, sometimes ethically debatable, where players must demonstrate not only their skills but also logic, empathy, emotional resilience, and perspective-taking (Isbister, 2016).

The potential of video games has led to the development of SEL games (Farber, 2021), which delve deeper into social-emotional learning through current commercial video games in both formal and informal contexts. However, merging different disciplines (education, psychology, technology, and related fields) is necessary to design effective frameworks that promote social-emotional learning in this emerging field.

The articles presented in this Research Topic serve as a prelude for the scientific community to contribute to the theme and share ideas and discoveries about the complex relationship between video games and SEL.

Regarding the included articles, the study *Psychosocial impacts of mobile game on K12 students and trend exploration for future educational mobile games* (Li et al.) presents an interesting approach to how video games, in this case, on mobile platforms, impact the acquisition of SEL in K12 students. It illustrates how video games, when used with a didactic plan and expert supervision, can be a valuable tool, but conversely, when used indiscriminately, they can disrupt normal learning rhythms due to excessive screen time. The article discusses how video game design and future trends should be relevant considerations for researchers, as they can incorporate elements that foster social-emotional learning during the design phase.

The article *Acculturative game design with Latine communities: a bridging review on acculturative stress, behavior change, and serious games* (Conde et al.) focuses on using serious games to address stress in the acculturation processes of Latine communities. While the main premise is to reduce cumulative stress in these communities, managing emotions and SEL developed through video games is crucial. In this context, designing serious games with cultural sensitivity aids in acquiring social-emotional skills such as empathy, effective communication, and conflict resolution. Culture is presented in an immersive, narrative, and interactive manner, engaging players with gaming experiences related to acculturation and its cultural and social-emotional implications. The article includes several contributions, notably the proposal of a basic framework for designing acculturative games, which promotes cultural understanding, empathy, and effective communication in acculturation contexts through serious games that serve not only ludic premises but also the preservation of the identity of Latine communities.

The article *Connect the dots: connecting problem solving and videogames in initial training of early childhood education teachers* (Antequera-Barroso and Carmona-Medeiro) highlights the concept of video games as significant learning tools capable of creating a motivating and facilitating environment for the teaching-learning process, involving students in traditionally challenging and unpopular subjects such as mathematics. In this sense, video games serve as a transformative axis through which students are attracted by novelty and the possibilities of applying this tool in the classroom, generating positive emotions and mitigating negative ones. Due to students' positive perception of video games, they change their perception of academic activities to a more enjoyable and attractive experience, allowing students to enjoy the learning process through tools with a very positive perception associated with playfulness. As indicated in the article, using video games in the classroom to teach mathematics increases the development

of social and emotional skills and fosters motivation, attention, perseverance, and collaboration.

The article *Using games to ignite teens' civic and social and emotional learning* (Rivers and Bertoli) demonstrates how digital game-based learning can aid in the development of social and emotional skills in young people. The use of video games with designs that consider the issues they are based on enhances student engagement with the task through immersive environments and meaningful learning mediated by interactivity tailored to the social-emotional needs of the students. Therefore, this positive impact of video games on task engagement, attitudes, self-perception, emotions, and self-efficacy helps improve key social-emotional aspects for students.

The articles show that video games can be a significant tool for acquiring social-emotional learning, offering an interesting and innovative perspective in contemporary educational research.

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