

LIFEISGAME: A SERIOUS GAME ABOUT EMOTIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

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Abstract

Objectives: Presentation of LIFEisGAME software, an interactive learning tool that aims to enhance facial emotion recognition skills of children with ASD. This game was developed by the Universities of Porto, Portugal, and Austin, Texas. People with ASD are less likely to attend to faces and are impaired in face discrimination tasks. Recently, technology plays an active part in helping these individuals to understand emotions and recognize facial expressions, trying to enhance social interactions. **Design and Methods:** We recalled to video recording of three case studies during a fifteen minutes game session. Participants were all male (5 to 8 years old), two were verbal and one non-verbal, all diagnosed with ASD. The game was presented on an Ipad 2 (9.7 inches, 1024-768 resolution) in a quiet setting. Parents filled a parental consent form and a questionnaire about their child's technology usage and emotions understanding. Footages were analysed according to: first facial area worked in the avatar, game usability and motivation to play. **Findings and Conclusions:** All children began exploring the avatar's mouth area to create facial expressions. Studies show that people with autism spend more time looking at the mouth and less into the eyes. Participants enjoyed the prototype game but still needs to be simplified. All cases had previous experience with computers games that facilitated game-play. Computers were mainly used by the three participants at home to watch music videos and to play computer games rich in music, bright colours and action. Fear, disgust and surprise were the most challenging emotions to recognize in opposition to happiness and sadness. Parents suggested adding musical stimuli to promote motivation. LIFEisGAME recalls to state-of-art technology to stimulate emotional understanding, bringing positive outcomes to quality of living of children with autism.

Keywords: Autism, Emotions, Prototype-game, Children, iPad.

CANNABIS FIRST EXPERIMENTATION AND REGULAR USE BY YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR CLOSE FRIENDS

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Abstract

The process of modelling and the social influence are important in the acquisition of new behaviours; being similar models in sex and age the most effective in acquiring new behaviours. This influence regarding to drug consumption has been highlighted by several studies. This paper investigates the relationship between cannabis consumption and close friends' consumption. Sample consisted of 2.137 university students (52.7% female, mean age=21.1; SD= 3.2) who answered an anonymous questionnaire. 63.2% of participants had consumed cannabis at least once and 97% of them were with friends in their first experimentation. The role of the close friends' consumption status is related to the age of the first experimentation and the age of general consumption: participants whose close friends were consumers, had tasted cannabis (or became regular users) on average one year before than those whose close friends were non consumers. Furthermore, there was a high concordance between participants and close friends' consumption. These findings support the use of the Social Learning Theory to explain the acquisition of cannabis consumption amongst young people and should be taken into consideration when developing cannabis consumption prevention programs.

Keywords: Cannabis consumption, Addictive behaviour, Social Learning Theory, Young people.
