

uswatul MUSLIMAH
ROLE MODELS FOR THE MUSLIMAH

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Are You an ADDICT?

Have you ever taken note of a drug addict's behaviour and the signs of his addiction? Bloodshot eyes... Poor sleep patterns and appetite... Irritability and fidgetiness... Depression and weight loss... Being 'completely zoned out'... Items or cash 'disappearing' (stolen) in their vicinity... These are just some of the typical signs.

Now, think of a gamer hooked onto their PC, Xbox or PlayStation. Do they not appear to be 'zoned out' and oblivious of their surroundings, spending hours and hours immersed in their fantasy world, leading them to become sleep deprived? Do their eyes not become bloodshot (from staring at the screen for extended periods)? Do they not become irritable and susceptible to mood swings? In many cases, does money not 'disappear' (where children 'borrow' their parents' credit cards for in-game purchases)?

It's quite uncanny really, just how similar the signs are, and just as a drug addiction can consume and kill a person, a gaming addiction can do the same – as seen in the incident below:

Piyawat Hatikan spent several nights playing multiplayer battle games at his home in Thailand when it finally took a toll on him. His father entered his bedroom, only to find that he had collapsed and was dead. Medics believe that playing through the night had caused a fatal stroke. His father mentioned, 'I want my son's death to be an example and warning for parents whose children are game addicts... otherwise they could end up like my son.'

Incidents of gamers dying for their addiction are becoming more and more common. However, it's not only the amount of time gaming that affects a person. Rather, the type of game also has a radical effect.

When a person plays a game, he loses himself in a fantasy world where there are no real-world consequences, and the deeper he immerses himself in that fantasy world, the more he loses touch with reality. Games teach us that life is not just cheap – it's free, as a simple 'restart' reverses your fatal error. In fact, killing, with visual bloodshed and graphic, gory details, is often the highlight and purpose in a game, leading the gamer to lose his sense of empathy and value for human life. After spending days, weeks and months immersed in this world, the gamer is left desensitized, with the definitive lines between right and wrong, and imagination and reality, completely blurred. To understand the consequence of this, consider the following:

- Adam Lanza massacred 27 people. He first shot his mother, and then drove to a school where he butchered 20 children and 6 adults. Lanza spent most of his time playing games such as Call of Duty and Gears of War. Apparently, Adam racked up 83,000 kills online, with 22,000 being head shots.
- Devin Moore murdered three policemen and is believed to have been inspired by the game Grand Theft Auto: Vice City. After his arrest, he made statements such as, 'Life is a video game. You've gotta die sometime.'
- Tyrone Spellman, a 27-year-old man, was playing on his Xbox when his 1-year-old daughter accidentally pulled down the console. He flew into a fit of rage and beat her on the head five times, resulting in her death.

These are just three examples of the extent to which games and their addiction can completely corrupt a person's mind, prompting him to lose the value of life and even stoop to killing his own parents or child. Furthermore, these are not isolated incidents, as many similar cases have been recorded worldwide. In essence, gaming is one form of 'digital addiction' which reduces a person to a 'cyber zombie'. However, as harmful and detrimental as gaming may be, for a person's spiritual, physical and even emotional wellbeing, it is NOT the only form of digital addiction.

According to statistics, the average person spends a minimum of 2 hours a day on social media. The general addiction to the smart phone is such that a battery dying or losing reception causes 73% of people to suffer stress and anxiety. This has led to the recognition of a new condition known as 'nomophobia' (no-mobile- phobia). However, just like drugs and gaming, social media addiction consumes a person and actually increases depression and misery

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