

How does dark play impact the effectiveness of serious video games?

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Credit: Mary Ann Liebert Inc., publishers

A new study has shown that allowing "dark play" in a serious video game intended to practice skills transferable to a real-life setting does not impact the game's effectiveness. Dark play, in which players choose inappropriate or unethical actions, is an option in nearly all video games. The study, which evaluated the ability and attitudes of medical students in caring for delirious patients, is published in *Games for Health Journal*.

The article entitled "Dark Play of Serious Games: Effectiveness and Features (G4HE2018)" was coauthored by Kiki Buijs-Spanjers, MSc, Harianne Hegge, MD, Debbie Jaarsma, Ph.D., and Sophia de Rooij, MD, Ph.D., University Medical Center Groningen, University of Groningen (The Netherlands); Fokie Cnossen, Ph.D., University of Groningen; and Evert Hoogendoorn, IJsfontein (Amsterdam, The Netherlands).

In this study, the researchers analyzed the effects of dark play in a serious game called "The Delirium Experience" on [medical students'](#) ability to advise care, their learning motivation and engagement, and their attitudes towards delirious patients. They found no significant differences between normal play and dark play on the game's effectiveness.

"Dark play is not ordinarily investigated in *Games for Health Journal*, yet it may provide a mechanism for enhancing effectiveness. Buijs-Spanjers and her team tested dark play in the context of a medical education game. Their findings should be of interest to diverse [game](#) designers," says Tom Baranowski, Ph.D., Editor-in-Chief of *Games for Health Journal*, from USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center, and Department of Pediatrics, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, TX.

More information: Kiki R. Buijs-Spanjers et al, Dark Play of Serious Games: Effectiveness and Features (G4HE2018), *Games for Health*

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