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Exploring Fun Ways to Learn About Our Bodies: Game-Based Learning and Gamification in Sexual Health Education

Have you ever wondered why we have health classes where we learn about our changing bodies and relationships? Well, guess what! Scientists believe that sexual education provides the information needed to make safe choices related to sex! Some super cool researchers wanted to find a way to make learning this information more exciting and impactful. So they created an experiment using games to teach us about healthy choices when it comes to our bodies and relationships. Let's dive into the research and see how games can make learning fun!

You know those times when you feel a bit awkward talking about certain things, especially as we start growing up? Well, these researchers noticed that some students were making unhealthy choices, and they thought, "Hmm, how can we teach sexual health and responsible decision making without making students uncomfortable?" So, they decided to explore if playing games could make learning about our bodies and relationships more comfortable, enjoyable and effective.

The researchers picked 120 middle school students in Tanzania, aged 11-15, and randomly split them into three groups to learn about sexual health. Let's break it down:

Control Group (Traditional Teaching): This group learned the way we usually do in class, with discussions and assignments.

GBL Group (Game-Based Learning): Imagine learning about our bodies through fun digital stories! That's what this group did. They played games where the learning was part of an interactive story. After playing, they had to answer questions about what they learned.

Gamification Group: This group learned about their bodies by answering quiz questions. They earned points for correct answers and even got badges for doing really well. It turned learning into a game!

Now, the exciting part – what did they discover? Well, the students who played games in both the game-based learning and gamification groups did better on sexual health knowledge tests compared to those who learned the traditional way! Not only that, but the game players were more excited, confident, and satisfied with the information they

learned. It turns out that playing games made learning about sexual health more interesting and enjoyable!

You might be wondering, why does this matter? As we grow up, understanding our bodies and making good choices becomes super important. These researchers found that playing games helps us learn better and know more about our sexual health, which could potentially prevent students from engaging in risky behavior.

In a nutshell, games can be awesome tools to teach us about our bodies and relationships. If we use games in a positive way, they can make learning more fun, especially for topics like sexual health, where it's tricky to talk openly about sex. Remember, this experiment looked at kids in a certain place, so the results might not be the same for you and your friends. But, who knows? Maybe in the future, you will get to play a game that helps you understand your body better and have fun while doing it!

Article: Haruna, H., Hu, X., Chu, S. K. W., Mellecker, R. R., Gabriel, G., & Ndekao, P. S. (2018). Improving Sexual Health Education Programs for Adolescent Students through Game-Based Learning and Gamification. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 15(9), 2027. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15092027>