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Title : 8,000 parents attend sessions on gaming addiction in 2008

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Date : 18 March 2009 1806 hrs (SST)

URL : <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/singaporelocalnews/view/416137/1.html>

SINGAPORE: More parents are seeking help to cope with their children's gaming habits.

Last year, 8,000 parents attended workshops on video gaming to find out more about gaming addiction. This is a three-fold increase from the previous year.

Thousands of young Singaporeans loot cars, knife pedestrians and shoot random strangers everyday in virtual reality.

Grand Theft Auto IV is one of the most popular video games here. Experts said the violence factor in such games is one of the reasons they are so popular.

Players experience an adrenalin rush when they go for the kill as their heart rate and blood pressure go up.

23-year-old Nicholas Wee admitted that playing such games is addictive as he spent about half of his teenage years in front of the computer screen.

"When I was in secondary school, I would head down to a LAN shop with my friends after school and spend around 10 hours there. On weekends, it will be a whole day and night affair. I feel that I was quite irresponsible at that time, but I didn't care because I just wanted to play games," he said.

Scientists are not saying that playing computer games are bad, but they advise parents to limit the amount of time their children spend on games and be more selective about the games their children play.

Various studies involving 37,000 people around the world have demonstrated that playing violent games is a risk factor for real life aggressive behaviour as the brain is what one makes of it.

Scientists explained that playing such games will inevitably shape one's attitude, especially among children and teenagers, as the neural network is constantly associated with the violence that comes along with the games.

Assistant professor Douglas Gentile, Psychology Department, Iowa State University, said: "If what you practise in the game is being vigilant for enemies, and when they do something, you immediately respond aggressively, then when you are walking down your school hallway, and you get bumped by another kid, instead of assuming it was an accident, you assume that this had hostile intent and that the other kid meant to make you mad."

Poh Yeang Chern, manager, TOUCH Cyber Wellness & Sports, said: "Some of the warning signs that parents should look out for in their children are - they are losing interest in their school work, they are lying, there is damage to social relationships, there is withdrawal and they need to play more to experience the same level of thrill."

Those who need help can speak to school counsellors or contact [TOUCH](#). - CNA/vm