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## VIDEO GAMES

# Parents, gamers beware

Game ratings may not deter children, violence of games up, says expert

**ZUL OTHMAN**  
[zul@mediacorp.com.sg](mailto:zul@mediacorp.com.sg)

WHEN it comes to video games, having ratings to protect the young and impressionable from their violent content may not make much of a difference.

In fact, American expert Dr Douglas Gentile believes that tagging such games with the “mature” label would only make children — who make up a large number of video game addicts — actively seek out the “forbidden fruit”.

Speaking to reporters, Dr Gentile, who runs the Media Research Lab at Iowa State University in the United States, said: “In general, there is a lack of validity for the ratings of video games,”

“Even the cartoonish of games are just as violent as the photorealistic ones ... and in my studies, we see that every gamer seems to be affected (even) in the short-term,” said the assistant professor of the university’s department of psychology.

He was speaking on the sidelines of a seminar, Online Gaming Addiction and Counselling Pathological Gamers. Organised by Touch Cyber Wellness and Sports (TC&S), the event was attended by some 70 educators, counsellors and social workers. It was aimed at helping them to prepare better in the face of increasing demand for counselling “pathological” gamers.

Cyber gamers, especially those who take part in massively multiplayer online role-playing games, are usually teenagers who often spend more than two hours online.

A number of studies involving 37,000 people around the world have shown that playing violent games may contribute to real-life aggressive behaviour.

Research has also shown that just over one in five gamers said that they preferred

#### MORE SEEK HELP

More parents in Singapore are seeking help to cope with their children’s gaming habits, said TC&S manager Poh Yeang Cheng.

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

In 2006, the organisation handled 145 cases of gaming addicts who needed counselling. Between that year and last year, there was a 65 per cent increase in the number of counselling cases.

Last year alone, TC&S received 200 enquiries from parents about gaming addiction. Out of this, some 40 cases were put to the attention of counsellors.

socialising and chatting online to offline.

With images now near photorealistic, said Dr Gentile, some video games have also enhanced the violence quotient to the point that some “games glorify psychopathic tendencies”.

When children who are addicted to these games start to associate aggression with fun, it might desensitise them and eventually have a significant impact on the gamers’ personalities.

For example, some games focus on being vigilant against one’s enemies.

“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,” Dr Gentile said.

The concern for gaming addiction has been growing around the world. Some countries, such as South Korea, China, and the United States, have responded by opening treatment centres.

Ultimately, said Dr Gentile, parent involvement is needed to address gaming addiction because “when parents do set limits, then there is a powerful limit factor”.

## SINGAPORE ROUNDUP

### COE PRICES ON THE RISE

Certificate of Entitlement (COE) prices posted a moderate increase for all but two categories in the second bidding exercise for this month.

COEs for commercial vehicles went up the most, by \$300 to \$5,600.

Premiums for small cars rose to about \$5,100, an increase of around \$230.

After dropping in the previous bidding exercise, open category COEs rose \$280 to \$5,982.

Big car COEs dropped by \$100 to \$5,000, while motorcycle COEs fell to \$912. **938LIVE**

### 280 GET WSQ CERTIFICATION

Some 280 Singaporeans who completed their Tourism and F&B Workforce Skill Qualification (WSQ) training last year received their graduation certificates collectively yesterday.

The graduates were from four Continuing Education and Training Centres for the tourism industry — Ascott Centre for Excellence, At-Sunrice GlobalChef Academy, Tourism Management Institute of Singapore and University of Nevada Las Vegas.

Guest of honour Trade and Industry Minister Lim Hng Kiang reiterated that WSQ programmes “provide an advantage to workers seeking employment in a tight labour market” and also help companies “build up their capability and raise industry standards”. **TEO XUANWEI**

wife and four friends had gone to stall No 43 for a meal last Saturday. Mr Rigby said he was later presented with a total bill of \$491, with the tiger prawns covering almost half of the amount.



AFP

### NEWTON STALL SUSPENDED

A stall at Newton Food Centre, which made headlines for charging an American tourist \$239 for eight tiger prawns, has been suspended for three months.

The National Environment Agency (NEA) said yesterday that it had investigated the incident involving tourist Michael Rigby and concluded that he had been overcharged by stall No 43 at the food centre.

The stall assistant involved in the overcharging incident will also be debarred from working as a stall assistant at the Newton centre for a year, said NEA.

According to reports, Mr Rigby, his

### THEIN SEIN GETS AN ORCHID

Visiting Myanmar Prime Minister Thein Sein had a new orchid strain named after him yesterday.

The Myanmar leader signed a symbolic ‘birth certificate’ officially naming the orchid, Dendrobium Thein Sein, during a ceremony at the National Orchid Garden.

Foreign dignitaries who have had orchids named after them include former South African President Nelson Mandela.

General Thein Sein also called on Singapore’s Acting-President JY Pillay at the Istana yesterday.