

More gaming addiction cases at counselling centre



by **Hetty Musfirah Abdul Khamid**

05:55 AM Feb 07, 2011

SINGAPORE - Even as a recent survey raised concerns over youth spending too much time online, a counselling centre here has seen a substantial increase in the number of gaming addiction cases.

TOUCH Cyber Wellness Centre told MediaCorp that it saw 71 such cases last year - a 40 per cent increase compared to 2009.

TOUCH cyber wellness and sports programme executive Anthony Yeong said: "There are some who play because it is an act of achievement for them. They have a competitive nature and they play to satisfy their personal ego."

Mr Yeong added that others play because of peer influence or they do so as a form of escapism.

Said Mr Yeong: "They don't like who they are, they prefer to go into the online world."

While about seven in 10 of those who sought help at TOUCH are attaining their counselling goals, the centre's assistant manager Ray Chua noted that the profile of gaming addicts is getting younger.

Said Mr Chua: "Our clients are typically young teenagers, about the age of 14 to 15. But we are also seeing cases where they are in the upper primary - about 11 to 12 years old."

For some of these cases, it is their parents who sought help on behalf of their children whose gaming habits were getting out of control, according to TOUCH.

The "State of the Youths in Singapore" report, which was released about a fortnight ago, found that nearly eight in 10 youths "strongly agree" or "agree" that they spend their time online for entertainment purposes.

Institute of Mental Health consultant Tan Hwee Sim told MediaCorp that the actual hours spent on gaming "is not a telltale sign of addiction".

Said Dr Tan: "Some students skip school so they can stay home and play or they will play overnight. But it's more about whether they are spending time that they can ill-afford, rather than the actual hours."

Mr Chua said the popularity of social networking sites such as Facebook may be making the situation worse.

Cases of youths addicted to games on such sites are already starting to grow, he noted.

"A lot more people are using social media ... (they are) also playing games such as Mafia wars and Mouse Hunt (on Facebook)," said Mr Chua, who noted that some teenagers who were addicted to gaming have dropped out of schools or failed their examinations as a result.

URL <http://www.todayonline.com/singapore/EDC110207-0000104/More-gaming-addiction-cases-at-counselling-centre>

Copyright 2011 MediaCorp Pte Ltd | All Rights Reserved