



“Survey on the Gaming Habits among Hong Kong Upper Primary Students” major findings and conclusion

Number of students interviewed: 2,006 students (Primary 4 to 6)

Number of participating schools: 8

	Participating schools (8)
Hong Kong Island	1
Kowloon	4
The New Territories	3

A. Excessive video game playing

On average, respondents played video games 3.6 days a week and spent 8 hours a week on gaming. Male students spent 11 hours per week on gaming and 13.9% of them spent over 21 hours, which means over 3 hours per day on average.

	Time spent on gaming per week on average
Male students	11 hours and 1 min
Female students	5 hours and 42 mins
Overall students:	8 hours 18 mins

Time spent on gaming per week on average	Male students	Female students
0 – 420 mins	59.6%	77.1%
421 – 840 mins	17.0%	12.6%
841 – 1260 mins	9.5%	4.5%
1260 mins above (i.e. 21 hours above)	13.9%	5.8%

The research team commented that the students spent too much time on gaming, which might influence other aspects of their lives, such as learning, physical activities and family time.

B. The high prevalence of gaming addiction among students deserves attention

According to The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) authored by the American Psychiatric Association, gaming addiction refers to uncontrollable and persistent engaging in gaming, leading to significant impairment. Based on the initial estimates,

nearly 10% of the polled students were at risk or might have been addicted. Among the male students, the percentage reached 14%. The phenomenon is indeed alarming.

	At risk (%)	Might have been addicted (%)	At risk or might have been addicted (%)
Overall students	4.4%	5.4%	9.8%
Male students	5.9%	8.1%	14.0%
Female students	3.0%	2.4%	5.4%

The three most common characteristics of gaming addiction among the students:

1. I realise that I spend too much time playing video games (60.3% answered “Yes”)
2. Want to play video games again after I am done playing video games. (55.2 % answered “Yes”)
3. When I am not playing video games, I think about video games. (34.6% answered “Yes”)

C. One in four students played violent video games

About a quarter (24.8%) of the polled students said the video games they played often or always showed violent images. Over 40% male while less than 10% female students played violent games. Past studies revealed that violent video games may influence children’s temperament, make them feel irritable, or desensitised to violence and thus agree with violence.

The percentage of often or always playing violent video games	
Male students	42.4%
Female students	7.5%
Overall students: 24.8%	

Findings also reveal higher addiction level was exhibited among the students who played violent video games more frequently. However, a more detailed relationship between violent games and addiction remains to be further investigated.

Game Over Programme (GOP): Pilot universal preventive intervention on gaming addiction among upper primary school students and its effectiveness

Being concerned about Hong Kong children’s gaming habits, the team has been actively promoting

preventive education to the community. Endowed with the fund granted by the “Quality Education Fund”, the team visited a number of schools in Hong Kong to promote the GOP from 2015 to 2017.

Past studies found that when a person’s ideal self deviates from the real self, he/she will experience considerable psychological distress. Escaping to virtual reality may give these people a sense of relief but it will also make them more likely to develop gaming addiction. However, if people can find comfort in an alternative environment to which they can escape in times of distress, such as a warm and supportive family environment, they will have lower needs to escape to the virtual game world to seek psychological relief. Hence, the GOP aims to improve the family environment, which is one of the major environments that have great impact on children. A nourishing family environment should serve as a good defence against gaming addiction and the accompanying adverse impact.

The pilot program offered 4-hour training courses to parents. Below were the expected learning outcomes:

- Parents’ knowledge of video games and gaming addiction would be enhanced
- Parents’ parenting skills specifically related to effective ways to exert control over children’s gaming activities would be strengthened.
- Parents’ communication skills specifically related to expressing care that fosters children’s positive development would be strengthened.
- Parents would learn about ways to engage in family-bond-building activities in order to facilitate more effective family functioning that would serve as protective factors against the development of gaming addiction.

To examine the effectiveness of the GOP, the team had designed a control course named “Enhancing children’s learning” for comparison. The team recorded children’s conditions (such as gaming time) before the start of the training, one week and three months after the training, so that the immediate effect and follow-up effect of the two courses could be evaluated.

There were 229 parents participating in this project (83 parents in the GOP group and 146 parents in the control group). The results show that:

1. The GOP could reduce children’s gaming time

Immediate effect: Both GOP and control course could significantly reduce children’s gaming time.

Follow-up effect: The control group did not show a significant change in gaming time, but a significant reduction in gaming time could still be observed in the GOP group.

2. More than 90% of the parents were satisfied with the GOP course and agreed that the course could achieve the following purposes:

- ✓ Reducing children’s gaming time

- ✓ Assisting their children to stay away from violent games
 - ✓ Assisting their children in prevention of gaming addiction
 - ✓ Strengthening parents' parenting skills
 - ✓ Strengthening parents' skills of communicating with their children
 - ✓ Helping the families to function more effectively
3. A mother participant in the GOP course said that she could feel the change in the way she communicated with her child. She has started to organise some activities for the family, such as playing balls, chess, etc. Her son is very fond of these activities and his gaming time has been reduced.
4. The team gives three important suggestions to parents for dealing with children's gaming behaviours
- Communicate with your child to agree on a time limit on gaming
 - Foster good parent-child relationship
 - Help your child to develop a variety of hobbies to reduce his/ her reliance on video games
5. The team will continue to promote knowledge and skills of prevention of gaming addiction to the community through the following channels, including:
- Launch a website (www.psychology.hku.hk/qefgop) to disseminate the project information. The website was kick-started on June 20 to provide background information about the project. It will be fully launched in early August and the public can gain access to comprehensive information and download resources.
 - Distribute manuals to all the primary schools in Hong Kong, which detail the lesson plans and teaching materials for the GOP course for their reference, so that schools can organise courses for parents.
 - Distribute pamphlets to parents with advice on prevention of gaming addiction.