

Online games addiction a cause of poor mental health?

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Rachel Sato

World of Warcraft, Everquest and Starcraft - enormously absorbing and popular online games enjoyed by millions around the world but a dangerous addiction for some?

PhD social marketing researcher Rachel Sato, from QUT's School of Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations, said [young men](#) were the most vulnerable to problematic online gaming.

"There is growing evidence that young men are more likely than young women to spend excessive amounts of time gaming which can have

negative effects on their [mental health](#). This includes addiction and depression and can lead to difficulties with social relationships," she said.

Ms Sato is investigating a link between obsessive online gaming in MMORPGS (Massively multiplayer online role-playing games) and [poor mental health](#) in young men.

"I am calling for participants who are male, aged between 18 and 25, who have recognised they have a problem with controlling the amount of time they spend in [online games](#), or who have overcome it," Ms Sato said.

Ms Sato's interest in the subject stems from her own brush with online gaming addiction.

"From the age of 14 to 16, I played MapleStory about four hours a day on school days and 10 hours a day on the weekend," she said.

"My grades dropped dramatically and my mother took away my phone and privileges - it was a wakeup call.

"The game I played had simple graphics but all the elements of World of Warcraft etc. It was addictive because it had lots of quests and rewards - you could win things in the game such as a special weapon or equipment.

"The game never ends and you feel excitement, sadness when you lose something and good when you conquer a quest with other people. It gives you sense of belonging as part of a group or 'guild'."

Ms Sato said her research was focussing on the triggers that caused problem gamers to realise they needed help and she also wants to find out where they seek help to overcome their compulsion to play.

"It is known some gamers play 80 hours a week. A man in South Korea died of dehydration and exhaustion after playing for 50 hours straight.

"Gamers have a problem when gaming becomes more important than education, socialising and work - behaviour that is like drug addiction but we don't know if problem gamers have an underlying addictive personality.

"Other research suggests some life event such as a new baby, loss of family member can be the trigger for making them realise it had taken over their life."

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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