

Abstract of thesis entitled:

“Online game playing and early adolescents’ online friendship and cyber-victimization”

Submitted by LEUNG, Nga Man

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at The Chinese University of Hong Kong in July 2010

The present research comprised four studies to investigate the relation of online game playing and correlates of three important aspects, namely friendship, victimization and bullying, of social development of Hong Kong Chinese grade 5 and 6 students. Comparisons of these correlates across two contexts, the real life and internet experiences were also made. Four hundred and ninety-four grade five and six students (mean age = 11.54, $SD = .91$) participated in Study 1. Average time spent on different types of different type of computer games and the importance of social functioning of online games was determined. Average time spent per day on Massively Mutliplayer Online Games (MMOGs), solitary computer games, handheld video games e.g. NDS, PSP, and home video consoles, eg, Wii, were 2.38 hours ($SD = 2.21$), 1.66 hours ($SD = 1.86$), 1.25 hours, ($SD = 1.54$), and .67 hours ($SD = 1.15$). Social functioning of online games was positively correlated with life satisfaction of early adolescents.

Seventeen teens (mean age = 11.71, $SD = 1.26$) who had experiences in playing online games participated in the focus group interviews of Study 2. Their responses were collected in order to develop comprehensive scales to measure cyber-victimization and cyberbullying, so as to better understand the differences between online and real life friendship and also to reveal the reasons behind playing online games. Studies 3 and 4 based on the sample of six hundred and twenty-six grade 5 and 6 students (mean age = 10.81, $SD = .83$), but with different purposes. In Study 3, two scales, both with eight items were developed for

measuring cyber-victimization and cyberbullying, They have satisfactory reliabilities and criterion validities. In Study 4, the relative quality of best friendship in online games versus in real life, and also the relative importance of friendship, victimization, and bullying in real life and in online games in relation to early adolescents' overall psychosocial adjustment were shown. It was found that online victimization and online bullying were negatively related to psychological well-being of early adolescents. After controlling demographics, computer gaming habits, school victimization and real life friendship, online victimization still significantly and negatively explained additional variance in friendship satisfaction, while online friendship still positively and significantly explained additional variance on social competence, friendship satisfaction, self esteem and life satisfaction after demographics, computer gaming habits, school victimization, and real life friendship being controlled. Gender moderated the relationship between real life friendship and social competence and friendship satisfaction, but it did not moderate the relationship between online friendship and all the psychological constructs. This research demonstrated the theoretical and practical importance of investigating social experiences (both negative, i.e. being cyber-bullied, and positive, i.e. building up online friendship) in the online context.