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## A Study on Game Rating in KOREA for Juvenile Addiction and CRIME Prevention

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### Abstract

*The purpose of this study is to analyze present condition and problem of game rating system in Korea. Consequently this study will offer effective ways to review rating and to reduce on-line crime.*

*As the technology of game consoles advances and the age brackets of game consumers expand, computer and video games have been diversified both in content and expressions. Given this phenomenon, social requirements have intensified, and a typical requirement is related to the influence that the content of a game may have on young people. In reality, increase of on-line game user caused various social problem. In addition, item-related crime of on-line has been increased lately because of growing on line market.*

*In connection with this situation, the academic world has been interested in the game rating system to control social problems of online-games effectively. To fulfill those social need, the Game Rating and Administration Committee was established in December, 2013 under The Game Industry Promotion Act(abbreviated as Games Act) as a public organization for fostering the sound game culture and developing the game industry in Korea.*

*In rating games or entertainment software pursuant to Article 21 of the Games Act, the Game Ratings Board shall ensure the ethical and public nature of games, protect children and youth, and respect the creativity and autonomy of the games. Games provided under Article 2 subparagraph 1 of the Games Act shall be reviewed by the Board when they are produced for sale or provision for use.*

*Korean game rating system is the advanced system to control social problems of online-games effectively. But reform measures have to be asked to solve the performance problems. We suggest the followings.*

*First, to pass on information to game rating, the introduction of various cooperation strengthening method like ESRB is required, and all this depends on the growth of partnership. Second, it is required content descriptor regulations to prevent the game addiction of users. Addiction criteria for games shall be by internet game addiction diagnostic scale. Third, The Game Act will need to be updated to reflect recent changes in Korean game culture similar to the CERO in Japan. Finally, rating system in Korea is not considering Interactive Elements. And with the introduction of Interactive Elements, game users will have greater information of on-line games.*

**[Keywords]** Game Crime, Juvenile Delinquency, Game Rating, GRAC, Game Addiction

### 1. Introduction

As the technology of game consoles advances and the age brackets of game consumers expand, computer and video games have been diversified both in content and expressions. Given this phenomenon, social requirements have intensified, and a typical requirement is related to the influence that the content of a game may have on young people. In

reality, increase of on-line game user caused various social problem. In addition, item-related crime of on-line has been increased lately because of growing on line market.

In connection with this situation, the academic world has been interested in the game rating system to control social problems of online-games effectively[1]. To fulfill those

social need, the Game Rating and Administration Committee(abbreviated as GRAC) was established in December, 2013 under “The Game Industry Promotion Act” as a public organization for fostering the sound game culture and developing the game industry in Korea.

GRAC has been independently administered for the classification of game contents which are manufactured and distributed in Korea. Also, the GRAC reviews illegally distributed game websites, arcade game machines and gambling games to protect the public from negative influences such as illegal gambling, excessive violence and nudity[2].

The intent of game rating policy is to protect youth by informing on the appropriate age for use of games. Also, the study on game rating is able to suggest implications for juvenile addiction and delinquency prevention.

This study will suggest an essential factor to solve juvenile addiction and delinquency through reality and improvement direction of GRAC. The result of this study will be basis for empirical research. Besides, it will be utilized reduction of juvenile delinquency.

## 2. Game Rating in Korea

### 2.1. Purpose of rating in Korea

In rating games pursuant to Article 21 of the Games Act, the Game Ratings Board (hereinafter referred to as the “Board”) shall ensure the ethical and public nature of games, protect children and youth, and respect the creativity and autonomy of the games. And the Board shall respect the generally accepted notion of common sense in applying these regulations and rating criteria to the various different types of games.

Also, the Board shall review the games based on the principles of fairness, objectivity, promptness, non-disclosure of confidential information, and minimum regulation[3].

Major duties of Board include but are not limited to the following:

- Decision on rating classification of game(arcade games, adult games).

- Ascertainment on harmfulness to youth and speculative nature of game.

- Post management of classified game including the production and distribution of classified game and confirmation and inspection about provision for normal use of game

- Investigation and research to secure objectivity of rating classification of game

- Operation of an illegal game reputation and reward system to eradicate illegal game

- Corrective action recommendations about illegal game, advertising or PR materials provided through the information and communications network[2].

## 2.2. Item and principle of rating

### 2.2.1. Item of rating

Games provided under the Games Act shall be reviewed by the Board when they are produced for sale or provision for use.

The games to review shall be classified as follows: PC games, Video games, Mobile games, Arcade games and Other games[3].

### 2.2.2. Principle of rating

The principles listed below shall be followed in the rating of games:

- Content centrality: Parts other than content shall not be subject to rating.

- Context: Games shall be rated based on the overall context and situation.

- Common sense: Rating shall correspond to the generally accepted notion of common sense.

- International compatibility: Rating shall have global compatibility.

- Consistency: Games shall have identical ratings even when rated by different raters at a different time.

Also the matters listed below shall be inclusively considered in the rating procedure:

- Provocative content: Kissing, hugging, body exposure, sexual acts, peeping, naked body, language with connotations of sex, adultery, incest, rape, discharge, prostitution, etc.

- Violence: Bleeding, gore, amputation, bodily defects, horror, description of scuffle, etc.
- Crime or drug use: Instigation of crime, drug use, abuse, drinking or smoking, etc.
- Inappropriate language: Inappropriate description concerning language or ideologies.
- Description of speculative acts, etc.: Description of speculative customs, acts or appliances[3].

### 2.2.3. Rating criteria

Games shall be rated as follows: All, 12+, 15+, Adult or 18+. Also, games shall be rated or classified as follows in the case of games that are provided at a location equipped with given commercial facilities(arcade games): All, Adult only.

Concretely, the rating criteria for games shall be as follows:

A. The criteria for the 'All' rating shall be as follows:

- Games that do not feature representations whose themes or content may be harmful to minors, including obscenity, violence and speculation.
- Games that do not feature any content that may be harmful to minors but which have contents that may be helpful in cultivating their emotions or furthering their education.
- Games that do not feature any representations that may be harmful to minors either mentally or physically, including ideologies, religions or customs that are not tolerated generally.

B. The criteria for the '12+' rating shall be as follows:

- Games that include themes or contents that may have a harmful influence on minors under 12 years old, including obscenity, violence and speculation.
- Games that include themes or contents that may be mentally or physically harmful to minors less than 12 years old, including specific ideologies, religions or customs that are not tolerated generally.

C. The criteria for the '15+' rating shall be as follows:

- Games that include themes or contents that may have a harmful influence on minors of less than 15 years old, including obscenity, violence and speculation.
- Games that may be mentally or physically harmful to minors less than 15 years old, including specific ideologies, religions or customs that are not generally tolerated.

D. The criteria of the 'Adult only' rating shall be as follows:

- Games that include themes or contents that may have a harmful influence on minors, including factual representation of obscenity, violence and speculation.
- Games that may include a direct specific representation of matters concerning specific ideologies, religions or customs that may affect minors mentally or physically[3].

## 2.3. Marking of rating and content descriptors

The producers or distributors of all games shall mark their trade name, game rating, content descriptor, and game operation related information pursuant to the Games Act. Concretely, the game content descriptors shall be as follows: Provocative content, Violence, Horror, Language, Drug, Crime, Simulation of speculative acts, etc.

Also the game ratings shall be indicated by the colors and the Board may recommend that ratings and content descriptors for online games be displayed on their website.

## 2.4. Procedure of rating

### 2.4.1. Application for rating

One who wishes to obtain a rating shall submit Game Rating Application Form along with a written game description and the below-listed items.

- Video clips and photos showing key processes of the game.
- A photo of game appliances or devices(including front, rear, left and right sides) in the case of games that are played on dedicated appliances or devices.

- Games that can be played(including the related files and attachments for games that require operational information devices to be attached).
- A document indicating the account for logging on the game when it is provided on a computer network.
- A detailed description of the game content.
- Power of attorney signed by the game producer or distributor in the case of games attached to a book(limited to those whose rating is requested by the book publisher).
- An electric appliance safety certificate.

In addition the Board may request the applicant to submit materials required for performing the rating service. Also a site review shall be conducted when the Board deems it necessary at the request of the applicant.

#### **2.4.2. Revision of game content and reclassification procedure**

One who intends to revise the content of a game shall submit to the Board Game Content Revision Report and Description of Game Content Revision which describes the details of revision.

The Board shall take action as provided under the following after checking the details of the revisions made to a game whose revision is being reported: Notice of maintained rating or Notice of revised rating.

Reclassification shall be requested for games that have been notified as being subject to reclassification, within seven days of receiving notification of the fact.

#### **2.4.3. Revocation and rejection of rating**

The Board may refuse to rate a game if a game or its provider falls under the Games Act. The Board shall provide the applicant with an opportunity to express his opinion before it decides to revoke or rejection the rating pursuant to Games Act. An applicant who objects to a decision on a rating or rejection pursuant to Games Act shall submit to the Board Objection against Rating indicating the reasons for filing the objection within 30 days of receiving notification of the decision.

#### **2.4.4. Notification of rating and so on**

The Board shall issue Rating Certificate to the applicant for whose game a rating has been granted.

The Board shall determine the rating within 15 days from the day on which the application is received. In cases where the rating cannot be determined within the specified period due to an unavoidable cause, the Board shall notify the applicant of the cause and review the schedule in writing.

The Board shall immediately notify the concerned agencies in the event that it discovers the illegal obtainment of a rating, forging, tampering with or illegal use of games whose rating has been rejected, or the rating outcome[3].

#### **2.5. Committee**

Committee members become Board of Directors members automatically. The committee shall be comprised of nine members including chairperson. Also chairperson is standing member and eight members are non-standing. The terms of office for the each member shall be three years. The each members shall be commissioned by the Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism upon recommendation by the heads of organizations Presidential Decree(chairperson elected among the members)[4].

### **3. Conclusion**

The purpose of this study is to analyze present condition and problem of game rating system in Korea. Consequently this study will offer effective ways to review rating and to reduce on-line crime.

Korean game rating system is the advanced system to control social problems of online-games effectively. But reform measures have to be asked to solve performance problems. We suggest the followings.

#### **3.1. Cooperation strengthening in rating**

While the intent of game rating policy is to protect youth by informing on the appropriate age for use of games, the GRAC still has

strong control over the contents and the way services are provided by the game providers in Korea. Korean rating should be encouraged to enable the policy instruments to serve their intended purpose of informing users of the appropriate age for using games[5].

Although it does not have the legal authority to implement or enforce retailer sales policies with respect to video games, the ESRB in USA works closely with retailers to provide in-store signage which explains the rating system, support their store policies pertaining to the sale or rental of Mature-rated games to minors and help educate and train store associates and employees with regard to the rating system.

Also, while ESRB's regulatory oversight extends only to video game developers and publishers, ESRB works diligently to ensure that consumers are presented with rating information wherever video games are promoted, and that access to material intended for older viewers is appropriately restricted. Furthering that commitment, the ESRB Website Council was established as a partnership with many of the top game enthusiast websites, all of which commit to a set of common standards regarding the display of ESRB rating information and the use of age-gates for trailers promoting Mature- and Adults Only-rated games[6].

To pass on information to game rating, the introduction of various cooperation strengthening methods like ESRB is required, and all this depends on the growth of partnership. Introduction of procedure for cooperation strengthening in rating will improve informing users of the appropriate age for using games.

### **3.2. Addition of addiction criteria**

In rating review regulation, only the matters listed below shall be inclusively considered in the rating procedure: Provocative content, Violence, Crime or drug use, Inappropriate language, Description of speculative acts, etc.

But Online-game addiction is known to be concurrent with side effects such as lack of sleep, waning health, disturbed work or

schoolwork, depression or behavioral disorder[7][8][9]. Also, there were the significant correlations of game addiction and aggression[10][11]. So it is required content descriptor regulations to prevent the game addiction of users. Addiction criteria for games shall be by internet game addiction diagnostic scale.

### **3.3. Composition of a commission**

In Korea, the committee shall be comprised of nine members including chairperson. The each members shall be Commissioned by the Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism upon recommendation by the heads of organizations Presidential Decree[4].

But the current composition of a commission therefore does not reflect practical reality. In the CERO of Japan, committee consist of males and females in various occupations, aged from the twenties to the sixties, who are recruited widely from the public and have been trained in advance by CERO[12].

Therefore The Game Act will need to be updated to reflect recent changes in Korean game culture similar to the CERO in Japan.

### **3.4. Addition of interactive elements**

Interactive elements highlight interactive or online features of a product, including users' ability to interact with each other, the sharing of users' location with other users, if purchases of digital goods or services are offered, and/or if unrestricted internet access is provided. Rating system in Korea is not considering interactive elements. But when considering that problems in on-line game appear in interactions with others, there is a growing need to introduce interactive elements[6]. And with the introduction of interactive elements, game users will have greater information of on-line games.

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