

THE VIOLATION OF THE FREEDOM OF PLAY BY THE GAME RATING AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE OF SOUTH KOREA

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Abstract: The aim of this study was to predict the situation and future harm that the Korea Game Rating and Administration Commission had reviewed from August 2022 to present with a problem that violated people's freedom of play. The issue began with a worsening gender dispute between Korean gamers who exchanged attacks and reported games to the committee to prevent distribution of game content enjoyed by the other gender group. The committee neglected to confirm the nature of these issues faithfully and issued a recommendation to readjust the level of expression of games involved in the dispute or register the age rating upward. By fact-finding and reviewing related prior theories and research, this study confirmed that the committee abandoned grasping the nature of the problem, thereby violating freedom of play and letting social dispute get worse.

Keywords: Game Rating, Bureaucracy, Gender Dispute, Freedom of Play, Desk Administration, Otaku, Sexual Objectification, Information Ethics

1. Introduction

The aim of this study is to propose a new perspective for correctly examining the conflict between the Korean Game Rating and Administration Committee (GRAC) and gamers, a fight that has

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recently become ugly. GRAC assesses and determines the appropriateness of mobile and arcade games for official release in Korea, assigning age ratings to indicate suitability for different age groups. Recently, many Korean gamers have expressed distrust and hatred for GRAC, and unfortunately, GRAC has struggled to address these concerns effectively. This study proposes clues for Korean gamers experiencing the rapidly changing game market content to choose coexistence with GRAC or escape from Korean society.

The conflict between GRAC and gamers began on October 4, 2022, with the committee raising the issue of the smartphone game *Blue Archive*, produced by Korea's NEXON GAMES Co., LTD. Initially, independent rating business entities approved by GRAC set the game's age rating at 15+, but GRAC called for raising the rating to 18+, citing excessive sexual descriptions of certain scenes in the game (NEXON KOREA "Hello"). Around the same time, the Chinese-made game *Girl's Frontline* (X.D.Global), in which female characters appear in sexual nuances, received the same recommendation. Many male users of the two games began to dislike the committee, which confused the committee (*Economic Review*).

The aim of this researcher is not to create an environment in which mutual trust is restored between GRAC and gamers to promote the healthy development of the Korean game market. The intent is also neither to call for reforming the consciousness of the committee members nor to praise the collective action or the exercise of force on individuals whose rights GRAC has violated. Rather, the hope is that individuals will be able to accurately recognize a series of situations related to GRAC and then help them judge and implement what they think is the best way at the individual level.

2. Research Context and Methods

Blue Archive is a game developed over three years under the tentatively named *PROJECT MX* in 2018 (Gamemeca.com "Kim-Yong Ha"). The "M" in "MX" stands for *moe*, a Japanese term for a pure passion for young and cute female animation characters (Galbraith), and the "X" stands for the US-made real-time combat strategy simulation series *XCOM* (Firaxis Games, 2022). That is, *PROJECT MX* aims for real-time combat strategy simulation games featuring pure, cute girl characters. In addition, a significant feature of *Blue Archive* is improving intimacy through conversations with players while

actively appealing to attractive looks, voices, and personalities and compensation factors such as illustrations with consistent sexual appeal.

There are multiple defenses of people who enjoy these games. According to Honda (2005), characters that trigger *moe* provide something reliable beyond the ego that allows players to soon achieve self-realization. These characters become vital support figures that will satisfy sexual satisfaction, which ordinary male otaku cannot obtain from the rationality of reality (Honda, 2005). Saito and Sakai (2006) said that individuals’ choice of these creations is not necessarily a reason to reject real-life relationships but defined them as not subject to criticism and correction because they pose no objective harm to society. Several researchers also found that such games do not significantly correlate with gamers’ gender discrimination or lack of empathy (Breuer et al., 2015, pp. 197–202; Read et al., 2018, pp. 683–698; Ferguson and Colwell, 2020, pp. 16–27).

Of course, many researchers look at these games and the gamers who enjoy them from a critical perspective. Azuma (2009) pointed out that the consumption behavior of Otaku, a leading cultural consumer group that wants the *moe* culture in Japan, that is, those who have developed an understanding of and indulgence in media culture, eliminates narratives and collects and combines only attractive elements. Yomota (2006) warned that *kawaii*, the character factors that trigger *moe* and their components can also hide dangerous essence. A description that highlights women’s sexual aspects or reflects sexual violence in video games can instill a false view of women in male gamers (Yao et al., 2010, pp. 77–88; Rollero and Tartaglia, 2019, pp. 209–219; Lim et al., 2021).

Ultimately, a game that reflects *moe* cannot be free from criticisms regarding the sexual objectification of women, regardless of its form, and age rating agencies are responsible for reviewing opinions from all perspectives to fairly conclude the appropriate ages for the different games they review. Specifically, they must reach significant consensus on the appropriateness of their controversial decisions. As an academic discussion of Korea’s game age rating system, there is a case of comparing and analyzing differences between countries on age judgment criteria from a review procedure or a comprehensive perspective (Kim et al., 2019, pp. 15–38). However, this study is about how the specific country's rating system is designed and operated.

Notably, there were no game-related studies in which the researchers identified and discussed cases of gender, history, or ethnicity-related cultural shocks following game rating decisions and how GRAC or other deliberative organizations resolved them.

In contrast, there are examples of active approaches to this discourse in the West. Jennifer deWinter (2015) cited a case in which the Japanese adult game *Rapelay* was distributed in parallel through amazon.com in the UK, causing controversy, demonstrating that private sellers overseas whom a copyright holder has not approved can distribute even games released only on the Japanese market regardless of the producer's intentions (pp. 244-258). Conway and Crawford (2015) looked at how Australian history was reflected in a prejudice toward violence and gender in video games and how this prejudice affected the country's rating system (pp. 85-97). Finn (2015) discussed Rockstar Games, known for its gangster game series *Grand Theft Auto*, which confronted the Australian Rating Board for the release of the series (pp. 98-112).

In addition, because all these studies deal with cases that limit specific individuals' "Rights to Play," it may be necessary to refer to Apperley's (2015) argument that universal children's rights should be included; he makes considerable reference to Huizinga (1970), which is undoubtedly appropriate when discussing the fundamental human right to grow through play. However, this study does not limit the right to play to children. In addition, as described later, this study confirms that the controversy surrounding the sensational portrayal in the game in the case of *Blue Archive* led to a group of male and female gamers defending their rights and attacking the rights of the opposite gender. Therefore, even though this paper's title incorporates freedom of play, the study takes a different direction from Apperley.

Except for Apperley (2015), these studies reflect instances of how countries' deliberative institutions or civil societies conservatively deal with foreign games. However, the *Blue Archive* case mentioned in this study is a domestic Korean game problem. Therefore, it is necessary to look at research examinations the critical discourse on domestic rather than imported games and other digital outputs, i.e., cartoons, animations, VR products. At this time, it is helpful to refer to Korenaga (2019), who criticized a sociologist who attacked the beautiful VR character Kizuna Ai from a feminist point of view in Nippon Housou Kyokai's educational program (pp. 7-18), and

Weber’s (2018) thesis on what the future of bureaucracy will be. GRAC for instance, was established as a typical bureaucratic institution. It is also interesting that the process of solving the Blue Archive problem reproduces the degenerative evolution of the bureaucracy that Weber feared.

3. Consideration #1: GRAC and Its Deliberation Method

Korean Administrative Game Review Committee is, in fact, entitled to implement regulatory measures based on law. The agency was established to take over the Korea Media Rating Board (KMRB), which released a controversial review of *Sea Story*, an arcade gambling game released in 2004 (Hankyoreh, 2022). Based on Article 4:16 of the Game Industry Promotion Act (GIPA) enacted on October 29, 2006, the Game Rating Board (GRB) under the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism was established on October 30, and the agency took over all KMRB concerning game rating. After changing its name to GRAC in 2013, it transferred some of the games that did not fall under the 18+ rating to the Game Content Rating Board (GCRB), a private organization, in May 2014 (GRAC “Overview”). Figure 1 presents a breakdown of these organizations.

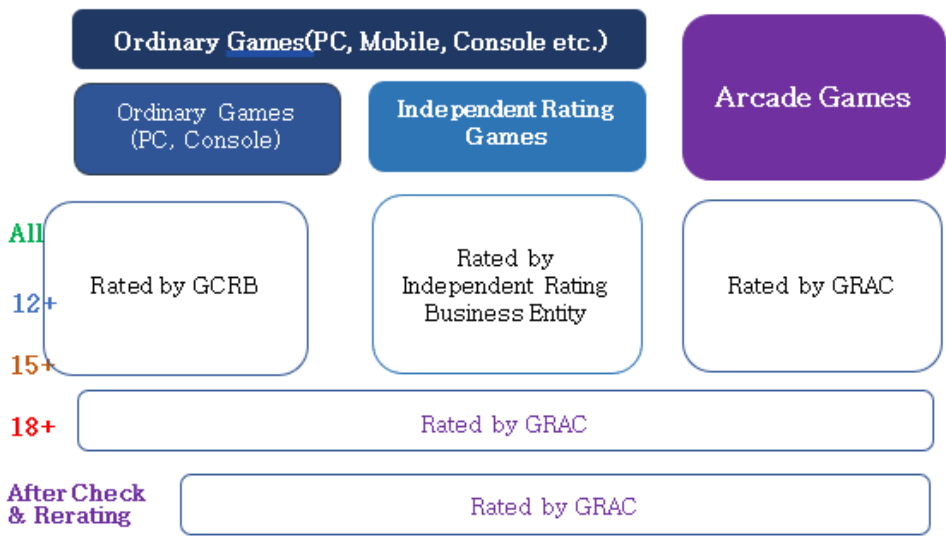


Figure 1. Korean Organizations Responsible for Reviewing Games as of 2022.

Source: GRAC, Press Conference

There are other reasons GRAC and GCRB have the characteristics of administrative groups. As of 2022, all Korean game software and hardware on all platforms, whether released offline or online only, are required to be reviewed by institutions designated in the GIPA (GRAC “Enforcement”), and at this time, the former refers to GRAC, and the latter refers to GCRB. GRAC rates arcade games, mobile games, adult games, and educational and personal creative activities for their public interest value, and GCRB rates all games in the PC environment and games for video consoles (Figure 1). This underscores their function as administrative entities overseeing the comprehensive evaluation and classification of games across various platforms.

In 2019, the Independent Rating Classification System began that allowed distributors of PC and video games to directly set age ratings with permission from related agencies. From then on, most app store and video game platform operators operating in Korea have applied for this permission, set their own age ratings, and distributed their games. GCRB is nominally a subsidiary of the Game Cultural Foundation, a private foundation jointly funded by Korean game operators (GCRB, 2022). At first glance, the scope of state intervention has been reduced. However, GIPA Chapters 4, 21, Articles 21-8, and 21-9 specify that GRAC will reclassify the GCRB grades and its rating agency. Hence, state intervention persists, as illustrated in Figure 2, which delineates the divisions within GRAC executing various functions within the administrative framework.

The committee’s website discloses its organizational structure and a list of divisions. As per this information, a total of 117 individuals, including the chairman, are categorized as essential personnel (see Figure 2). Additionally, external personnel, such as the Special Committee on Technical Review (18 people) and the Rerating Advisory Committee (49), are recognized as individuals appointed as needed, particularly in addressing temporary issues. Within the essential personnel, many are assigned to multiple teams, with 29 members in the Invitation and Management Team, 16 in the Rating Service Team, and 19 in the Ex officio Rerating Team.

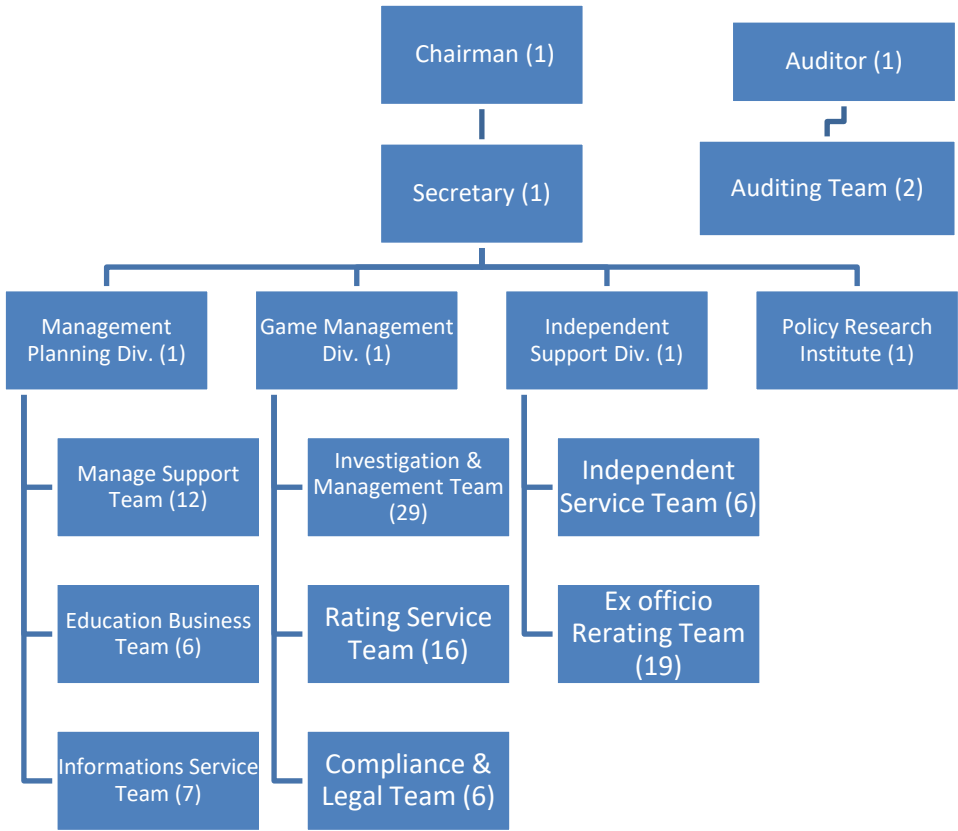


Figure 2. Organizations of GRAC.
 Source: GRAC “Organizations”

Note: Numbers in parentheses represent the numbers of members on the team.

Figure 3 illustrates the process of age-grade screening in GRAC, while Figure 4 outlines the process for retrials. Redeliberation initiates either through GRAC's self-monitoring or in response to civil complaints and media reports. Subsequently, upon considering the opinions of the business operator, the committee adopts a resolution to reclassify the rating. The business operator retains the right to raise objections to this outcome within 30 days. Nevertheless, it is often referred to as a name-only procedure since objections have seldom been approved, as indicated in GRAC's press conference.

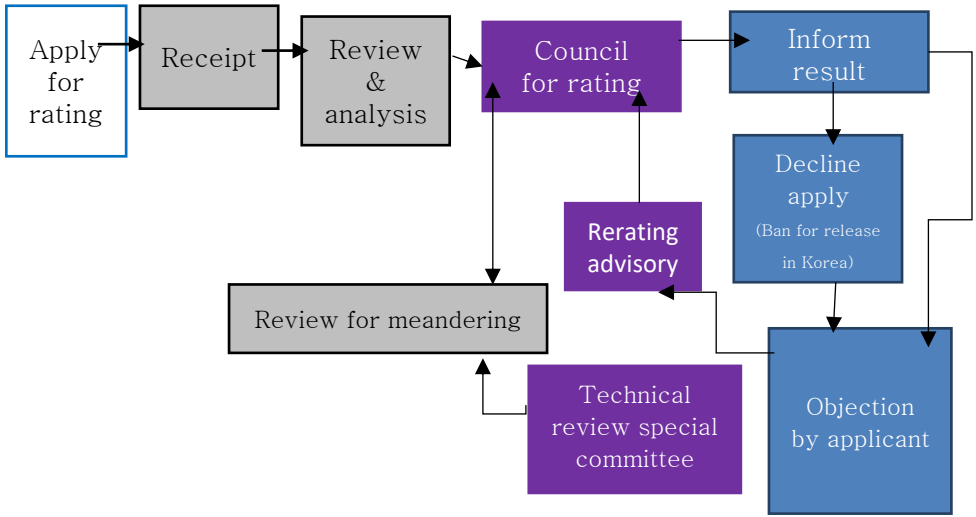


Figure 3. GRAC Rating Determination Procedures
 Source: GRAC “Procedure”

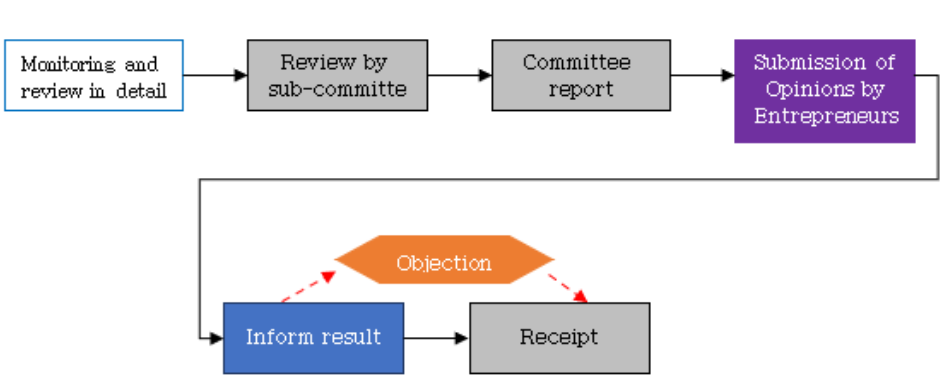


Figure 4. GRAC Ex Officio Rerating Procedures.
 Source: GRAC, Press Conference

According to the 2021 Game White Paper, GRAC handled a total of 939 games, averages of 3.756 games per day, based on 250 weekdays in Korea that year, and 82.6 games on the 22nd of each month (KOCCA, 2021, p. 44). Table 1 presents the panel members who review these games; there are nine who seem to involve themselves with too many of the games. In addition, except for two who have a history of serving in the GCRB, they lack academic knowledge or experience in the gaming industry, a frequent criticism (Techworld, 2022).

	Sex	Major Career (<u>Experience in the gaming industry is underlined</u>)
Chairman	Male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ <u>Former chairman of GCRB</u> ▸ <u>Former chairman of the Game Culture Foundation of Korea</u> ▸ <u>Former gaming industry professor</u>
Member 1	Male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Manager of a 3D fusion industry association
Member 2	Male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Attorney at a major law firm ▸ Expert member of the Copyright Committee ▸ <u>Former member of GCRB</u>
Member 3	Male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Vice director of the editorial desk of an economics journal
Member 4	Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Professor of counselling psychology ▸ Director of the Korean Child and Adolescent Counselling Association
Member 5	Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Director of the Institute of Digital Industry and Policy
Member 6	Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Chairman of ASSITEJ KOREA ▸ Evaluation committee member of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism
Member 7	Male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Professor of broadcasting media ▸ Member of the School Culture and Arts Education Promotion Committee based in the Gyonggi-Yeouju Office of Local Education
Member 8	Male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Attorney at a major law firm

Table 1

GRAC Panel Members as of August 29, 2022

Source: GRAC “Introduction of GRAC Panel”

The existing structure raises two significant concerns. Firstly, the perceived lack of fairness in resolving controversies about appropriate ratings stems from the limited representation of the gaming industry among committee members. Secondly, due to the fact that all members, except the chairman, hold outside jobs, the committee convenes only once a week on Wednesdays, as outlined in the GRAC structure. This scheduling constraint requires committee members, according to the Game White Paper records, to review approximately 14 games during each meeting, potentially impacting the thoroughness of the review process. Gamers have lodged multiple complaints about GRAC's practice of keeping its meeting minutes

confidential, and despite requests for disclosure, GRAC has seldom acceded to these demands. Also, the National Archives took issue with this situation. The authority warned GRAC that “when a public institution holds a meeting, GRAC must record minutes following the Enforcement Decree of the Public Records Act.” This caution reveals that the National Archive suspects GRAC of poorly drafting or, in some cases, failing to write meeting minutes. (Yonhapnews “National”).

Category	All	12+	15+	18+
Sensuality	No sensational content	Not causing sexual desire	Breasts and hips are depicted but not sensational	Sensational depiction expressed directly and concretely
Violence and Fear	Simplified depictions of violence, hatred, fear etc.	Minimal depictions of violence, hatred, fear, etc.	Realistic depictions of violence, hatred, and fear	Excessive depictions of violence, hatred, and fear
Crime and Drugs	No content featuring crime and drugs	Minimal depictions of crime and drugs	Indirect depictions of crime and drugs	Indirect depictions of crime and drugs
Language	No vulgar language and slang	Minimal vulgar language and slang	Realistic vulgar language and slang	Language used is harmful to adolescents
Meandering	Does not include gambling or less likely to promote gambling among adolescents	Promotes gambling in children under age 12 to a harmful extent	Promotes gambling in youth under 15 to a harmful extent	Promotes gambling to a harmful extent in all adolescents

Table 2
Current GRAC Game Rating Criteria
 Source: GRAC “Article 7”

The above figures and tables give an overview of the game rating process at GRAC. Note however that because the contents of the 935 annual games vary widely, it is not easy to designate their ratings based on the criteria in Table 2. Therefore, there are detailed provisions to supplement the above.

4. Consideration #2: *Blue Archive*

According to GRAC's announcement on November 10, 2022, discussions among committee members regarding the appropriate age rating for *Blue Archive* commenced on October 1, 2022. The impetus for these discussions arose from anonymous individuals expressing concerns about the current age rating assigned to *Blue Archive*. These concerns led to numerous complaints submitted from August 16 to 20, 2022, and GRAC confirmed the content of these complaints on August 22. On September 1, 2022, GRAC sent a notice to each app store operator, stating that they would be considering reclassifying the playable age for *Blue Archive* from 15+ to 18+. The official letter notifying this action was sent to app store operators on October 31, and GRAC also informed NEXON GAMES, the developer of *Blue Archive*, about this decision (GRAC, Press Conference).

This transition raised a number of questions. First, *Blue Archive* was released in Korea on November 9, 2021, about 40 days after the first complaint was filed with GRAC – who was in a position to complain about the game before it was even released in the Korean market. Second, who were the sources of the intensive round of complaints from August 16 to 20? The committee said it did not act on the prerelease complaints because the game was not yet on the market, but it did not clarify at the press conference how complaints were filed for the game before its release.

In answer to the first question, the game had been released in Japan on February 4, 2021, and Korean gamers could play the Japanese version by changing the nationality of their VPNs or app stores accounts in Korea. Ample Koreans had had experience with the game by the time of its Korean release. With regard to the second question of the flurry of complaints in August, critics on Twitter complained that *Blue Archive* sensationalized women's bodies, and users spread these complaints through retweets or screenshots. For example, one user disparaged fans of these sexualized characters as follows: “It feels

*** disgusting because this is a character design for pedophilia.”¹ Fans of *Blue Archive* also saw these tweets and spread them to more than 18,000 members of the public (Arca.live, 2022). Notably, at least 18 individuals responded with critical comments, expressing their dissatisfaction or disagreement with the content of the tweets.

GRAC's evaluation process for *Blue Archive* shouldn't have been limited to assessing inappropriate sexual depictions alone. Committee members should have also actively monitored and stayed informed about the social media discourse surrounding the game, especially paying attention to any complaints or concerns raised by the public. For example, on Twitter, a search of the game's title would have revealed that recurring keywords included “sexual objectification” and *yeohyom* (“misogyny”). Instead, GRAC treated the October 2021 complaints as isolated personal opinions; Committee members were unaware of a collective movement gaining momentum behind their deliberations (GRAC's rating reexamination classification officer, personal communication, December 13, 2022). By August 2022, entities online had shared how to submit complaints to GRAC regarding men's games including *Blue Archive*, making it easier to register criticisms than it had been in October 2021, such as this post on HYGALL.COM at 01:25 AM on August 17, 2022: “Thanks to this, I got a case and now I have many chances to complain! Let's win a world where paintings that despise women die out!” (Web.archive.org, 2022). This user felt that Korean men's taste for games that feature the sexual objectification of women warranted complaint.

In a different instance, a male gamer filed a complaint about the music action game *Project Hatsune Miku: Colorful Stage* for smartphones, which was dominated by female users, causing some content to be deleted (archive.is, 2022). The male gamer also criticized the Korean publisher of the game saying that some of the lyrics in the game were inappropriate for teenagers. Eventually, on August 16, the contents were deleted from the game, and angry female gamers responded in retaliation (Namu.wiki, 2022) by filing multiple reports on *Blue Archive*. And male gamers who confirmed this revenged in the same way to the music game *Ensemble Stars!! Music*, featuring male idol characters, which female gamers usually enjoy (Maekyung

¹ The *** designate profanity in the original text. While writing this thesis, the corresponding tweet was switched to restricted viewing status by the original author.

Gamezine, 2022). During the week beginning October 4, 2022, supporters of Blue Archive submitted a total of 14,628 complaints to GRAC, expressing condemnation for the adjustment of age-grade authority. On the other hand, only 12 complaints were received from HYGALL.COM users for the period of November 2021 to October 2022, who accused *Blue Archive* of sensationalism (The Joongang “The Moment”). Considering the numbers of people in the two groups and the time when the complaints were filed, it is difficult to say that they collided directly with each other. Nevertheless, the movements of the two groups were opposing because GRAC preferentially accepted complaints from people believed to be HYGALL.COM users and took measures accordingly in the summer of 2022. It is difficult for 14,628 male and 12 female gamers to collide with each other in a manner that causes a long-term public opinion dispute. Further, it is obvious that there is no evidence that these 12 women are legitimately qualified to represent the positions of all female gamers. However, as GRAC accepted the 12 opinions first and took measures accordingly, male gamers who felt it unfair began collective action, even going to the extent of gender conflict. Consequently, it can be said that GRAC has brought an absolute majority of male gamers and a tiny number of female gamers to the battlefield of gender conflict. Recognizing that HYGALL.COM was distributing pornographic videos based on foreign male adolescents, individuals also filed complaints with law enforcement agencies at various levels in the U.S. and South Korea (Inven.co.kr, 2022). As a result, HYGALL.COM temporarily closed its website and reopened it with a closed operating model that does not accept new members.

A total of 21 games were affected by the series of events, and HYGALL.com users complained about 18 of them as they all featured female characters with *moe* elements (Namu.wiki, 2022). However, irrespective of which side prevailed, this heated and vitriolic discourse reflected in reality the undesirable confrontation patterns that Korenaga (2019) feared. GRAC consistently said, “It is a principle to respond to all kinds of accusations anyway we heard,” but the organization did not try to identify the real aims of the individual complainants among the mass of complaints that they received from a group of people sharing similar ideologies. (GRAC’s rating reexamination classification officer, personal communication, December 13, 2022).

At a press conference held at the GRAC Metropolitan Office on November 10, 2022, the person in charge said that the level of sensational expression of *Blue Archive* was not suitable for the current level of “15+”. Moreover, they explained that they acted because the contents added to the update after the release was newly pointed out (GRAC, Press Conference).

Table 3

GRAC Criteria for Sensational Content


Rating	Summary
18+	<p>A. Sexual organs, etc. are not entirely exposed, but there is sensational body exposure.</p> <p>B. Sexual activity is discussed but not explicitly described.</p> <p>C. There are sounds reminiscent of sexual activity but not excessive.</p> <p>D. There is a discriminatory or demeaning description of a particular gender or group.</p> <p>E. There is sexual violence or prostitution, but it is not excessive.</p> <p>F. There is behaviour that is contrary to general social ethics (incest, group sex, etc.), but it is not excessive.</p> <p>G. Users can precisely and directly manipulate the game characters’ sensational behaviour.</p> <p>H. Users can engage in major levels of sexual activity in the game.</p>

Source: GRAC, Press Conference

Table 4 presents content from *Blue Archive* that GRAC determined met criteria A–F in Table 3 for a rating of 18+. These elements expand the communication with female characters mentioned in Chapter 2 of this study; they were not included in the original November 2021 release but were added as updates between May and June 2022. When games are updated, GRAC in principle must rerate them, but in practice, this process has flaws.

GRAC made its rating of Blue Archive based on the determination that content such as that in Table 4 indicated “sexual behaviour,” “obscene and sexual themes or expressions,” and “exposure or stimulating costumes.” For example, GRAC considered Shishidou Izumi presented in her swimsuit to be “a phonetic expression and an implicit description of a creature personified by an octopus trying to eat itself by attaching it to the lower body.” Combined with her troubling dialogue, the committee judged that the game met 18+ criteria A, B, and C from Table 3. GRAC also considered that Amau Ako’s game plot was “an inappropriate description of the situation in the relationship between teachers and students” that met criterion F. Regarding Kakudate Karin’s dialogue, GRAC interpreted that “it requires ‘reward,’ an expression of fetish sex, and asks for physical contact with underage characters.”

Table 4
Blue Archive Content GRAC Rated as Sensational

Character #1	Shishidou Izumi
Picture	
Problematic content	<p>“This feels weird.” “It’s wet and sticky...”</p>

Character #2	Amau Ako
Picture	
Problematic content	The crouching position with a dog's leash around her neck: "A-A walk?! Now like this?"
Character #3	Kakudate Karin
Picture	
Problematic content	"I, is this really...a reward?"

Source: GRAC, Press Conference

However, it is difficult to say that these criteria are consistently applied. For instance, in *PK World* (Gamemeca.com "MMORPG PK *Journal of Dharma* 48, 3 (July–September 2023)

World”), an RPG game for smartphones developed by NXU and released on December 8, players explore dungeons by purchasing female characters in bikini armor or gym clothes. First, female characters’ costumes are likely to be attacked by some critics (see Lim et al., 2021). In addition, the depiction in Figure 5 of attacking a giant female boss character confronted at the distal end of the dungeon is described as hitting the hip; however, unlike *Blue Archive*, GRAC did not judge the game to be sensational (“Confirmation of rating”). In principle, games likely to be judged as 18+ must be submitted to GRAC and not an independent rating entity. NXU directly received deliberation from GRAC, not its rating agency, because it did not deny that its games were aimed at adults, and *PK World* received a rating of 18+ not for sensationalism but for brutality. However, GRAC’s view that no problem exists in the sensational sector has caused controversy among leading gamers (Ruliweb.com, 2022).



Figure 5. Screenshot from *PK World*.

5. Conclusion

The controversy in Korea centered on *Blue Archive* has two characteristics: the negative behavior of the bureaucratic organization, which Weber (2018) was concerned about, and the behavior of disparaging and attacking individuals who disagree under the guise of being a citizen of a democratic country. Following the controversy,

GRAC clarified that their guiding principle involves addressing all received complaints. Nonetheless, they indicated a disinterest in identifying the individuals who raised concerns about the inappropriate 15+ rating assigned to the previous version of *Blue Archive* and the motivations behind such complaints. That is, even without knowing the complainant, GRAC considers that all complaints warrant their attention. In this attitude of service, it is hard to expect the responsibility to think about completing public social service. Weber (2018) also warned of organization actions such as secret business doings including GRAC's refusal to disclose meeting minutes (pp. 68-74). The chairman dismissed voices calling for clear standards for sensationalism saying, "it is a story to return to the era of military dictatorship to set it one by one," again reflecting GRAC's unwillingness to be transparent.

It is also inappropriate for gamers to submit complaints about games' content and attempt to have games suppressed or removed from the market just because they do not like the content. As Korenaga (2019) warned, such complaints reflect attacks on games' fans, which can escalate to dangerous confrontations. In addition, the user mentioned above who criticized *Blue Archive* on Twitter included a flag representing his sexual identity on his profile, suggesting someone advanced in gender discourse, and commentary from such individuals is no different from Korenaga's "authority-dependent criticism", which can worsen disputes.

Following GRAC's redesignation of *Blue Archive*, players under 18 who had grown accustomed to the original game were suddenly forced to play an "updated" version (NEXON KOREA "Pre-notification"). This shift in game play started with GRAC, a bureaucratic organization with practices many find questionable, and many individuals have lost sight of the original intent of the complaint process and have devoted themselves to gender battles. Moreover, GRAC is a bureaucracy that does not easily collapse once it is established, and complainants and gender warriors are merely anonymous online users. In an ideal democracy, gamers can defend their rights against these two groups in two ways.

The first is to use the power of politics to fight, for instance, how 5,000 disgruntled gamers have called for a parliamentary audit for GRAC with assemblymen (Yonhapnews "GRAC's deliberation"). As a result of the audit conducted based on the gamers' signatures, it was

revealed that some individuals among GRAC officials were involved in misconduct, leading to their resignations. However, this was related to the outsourcing of the development of an automated system to database the results of age classification for the sake of management convenience (GRAC "Press Release"). In fact, it is challenging to view this as a successful outcome of demands to rectify the age rating of the previous version of *Blue Archive* from 15+ to 18+ and the mandatory migration of users aged 15 to 17 to the separately prepared ‘Teen Version’ of the game. Instead, users perceived this as a result of incompetent administration, expressing their distrust and anger towards GRAC, which might have caused additional repercussions for GRAC in a different context. The other is to seek opportunities elsewhere, such as the Korean illustrator who moved to Japan with the determination that he could not fulfill his dream in Korea (Dcinside.com, 2022). These two options can also be selected together. In the current world, where complaints are actively submitted through the Internet, gamers unhappy with game review policies can exercise much of the political rights of their home countries in foreign countries as well. It is this researcher’s proposition that the combination of these two options can resolve a number of the abovementioned problems.

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