THE APPLICATION OF PARENTAL MEDIATION MODEL ON ONLINE GAME ADDICTION AMONG ADOLESCENTS: A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

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Abstract— Parental Mediation Model was initially formed to regulate children's attitudes regarding the media usage by strategies including active mediation, rule-making or restrictions, and co-viewing. Application of Parental Mediation Model was initiated with television usage, continued with video games and turned out to be more challenging by the emergence of new media which is more focused on the Internet. In Malaysia however, children spend a considerable portion of their waking time on surfing online material and they are mostly exposed to the negative outcomes of the new media especially online games and pornographic contents. This paper looks at the role of Parental Mediation Model to explore the mediation strategies that are effective in controlling negative experiences of online gaming such as game addiction and exposure to online pornography. The literature that is reviewed to fulfil the objectives of this paper suggested that parents need to be more engaged with their children's Internet use to minimize the negative effects of online gaming.
Keywords: Parental Mediation Model; Child Online Risk; Online Game addiction

1. INTRODUCTION

Parents utilize the Parental Mediation Model as an attempt to regulate and control their children's Internet use, and by the intention of maximizing the benefits and minimizing the difficulties of Internet application by their children. Parental mediation briefly refers to the parental interactions with children's media application. Earlier studies have suggested and empirically validated three types of Parental Mediation namely restrictive mediation, active mediation and co-use of media and all these three types of Parental Mediation turned out to be applicable for disorders in application of both television and video games [1]. Restrictive mediation refers to setting rules on the amount of media exposure to control children's media application whereas, active mediation is about discussing the undesirable aspects of the media content with children and co-using mediation is when parents share media experience with children without purposeful instructions or critical discussions [1].

Children would have access to the Internet from three years of age and that is the time that scholars start applying Parental Mediation Model on them to find out about the effective mediation strategies that benefit the parents in increasing benefits and decreasing online media exposure for the children. The number of children who are now using Internet in Malaysia is quite considerable. The higher is the rate of Internet application the higher would become the risk of exposure to games and materials with violent and sexual content. This actually justifies why Malaysia is the sixth most vulnerable country in the world to cybercrime, in the form of malware attacks through computers or Smartphones [2]. The average time that Children spend online reaches 11 hours per week, however a considerable number of children spend as long as 19 hours per week on their online activities. This rate increases up to 41% or 22.3 hours per week as the applicants turn 20-24 year old. Once we come to urban areas, studies show that almost 90% of youths use the Internet and 35% of them use mobile phones to access it. This situation makes it difficult for parents to monitor children's Internet usage which is why only four tenth of parents know about their children's online activities [3].

Online game addiction as a specific concern is an issue that Malaysian children and youth are exposed to. . Popularity of online games among younger age groups in Malaysia necessitates further understanding on the factors that boost up children's attitude towards online games and the ways that this phenomenon affects their lifestyle. Since children spend more time playing online games, parents have started to express their concerns about it. Studies show that the time that is spent on online games has highly increased in Malaysia [4,5]. Nevertheless, by applying Parental Mediation Model strategies, parents hope to minimize the disadvantages of the Internet usage like game addiction.

This study aims to identify which kind of parental strategy is more effective in reducing risks caused by Online Game addiction on younger Internet applicants.

2. PARENTAL MEDIATION MODEL

From the media studies, a wide range of publications is offering the necessity of parental assistance in guiding children's media use.

Likewise, scholars tend to be more concerned with the negative effects of media. This perspective was initiated as one of the limitations of Parental Mediation theory by [6]. In prior studies television was a favorite subject of discussion and with regard to that a set of studies still consider traditional parental mediation styles to be applicable for Internet applicants, but the new generation of studies are suggesting that since it is difficult to monitor online activities with traditional strategies, new strategies need to be investigated.

3. PARENTAL MEDIATION MODEL MEASUREMENT

As noted, parental mediation role in children's Internet usage is widely studied by scholars. However, scholars employ different scales and dimensions to measure the parental mediation role with children's media application. The old style of television mediation that parents apply, was called restrictive mediation, and even times rule making [7–9]. In this style parents set rules for viewing certain content. For instance, parents could set specific hours for their child's television viewing, or forbid them to watch a particular program [10]. Shek (2005) suggested that parental control strategies should include parental monitoring, knowledge, discipline, and psychological control. Parental monitoring is primarily defined as parental knowledge rather than active parenting strategies for obtaining that knowledge [12]. Dishion and McMahon (1998) also defined parental monitoring as a set of correlated parenting behaviors that involved paying attention and monitoring children's media adaptations.

As noted earlier, parental Mediation theory has been rooted in social/psychological media effects. In this perspective two types of parental control have been identified: "psychological control" and "behavior control". Psychological control refers to "parents' attempt to control the child's activities in ways that negatively affect the children's psychological world and thereby undermines the child's psychological development" (e.g. Invalidating feelings, personal attack, guilt induction, and erratic emotional behavior). The behavioral control refers to "rules, regulations, and restrictions that parents have for their children". Yet as it is stressed by Shek (2005), there is little research measuring these two psychological controls for media usage.

After all the attempts that have been made to classify various styles of parental mediation in children's Internet use, Active mediation and Restrictive mediation are considered as two broad dimensions of parental mediation that are discussed by some scholars (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990; Shin, Huh, & Faber, 2012). Active mediation happens once parents' explain and discuss about media effects. Restrictive mediation, on the other hand, is an attempt of controlling children's media application by setting rules based on appropriateness of media content (e.g. Content restriction) and media exposure time (e.g. Time restriction). These two dimensions in addition to Co-viewing, which stands for sharing online experience with children without critical discussions, have been noted in a number of studies by Nathanson, and Valkenburg (Shin & Hun, 2011; Nathanson, 2009, 2010; Nathanson, 1999; Valkenburg, Krcmar, Peeters, & Marseille, 1999). They described active mediation involves verbal communication between parents and children, while co-viewing involves nonverbal communication and restrictive mediation requires parent-to-child communication in the form of rules.

Research findings suggest that active mediation is more effective than other parental mediation strategies in reducing undesirable media effects on children [19, 20]. Following them Fujioka and Weintraub (2003), believed that active mediation is the most effective one since it is built upon conversation and critical discussion between parents and children, which leads them to develop critical thinking skills. Active mediation has been found to be associated with various positive socialization outcomes in new media and also use of the Internet for education [22]. Even though, according to Buijzen and Valkenburg (2005), restrictive mediation has been found less effective than active mediation, other scholars have found it to be more effective in reducing negative influences of the Internet on children, such as exposure to child-inappropriate content [24], cyberbullying [23], privacy invasion, and tweens' information disclosure on the Web [14].

Although some researchers found that restrictive mediation is less effective compared to active mediation, it was applied significantly more often compared to active mediation, and it is still more effective than non-mediation in reducing negative influences of the Internet on children. Researchers have found restrictive mediation less likely to be adopted by parents as a long-lasting attitude since it could affect only the immediate behaviours if children fulfil their parents' rules[14]. If parents strictly limit the amount of time that children can stay online then the children may be less likely to encounter online risks such as marketers requesting for personal information, however, such parental restriction strategy that limit children's internet use in general will reduce children's online opportunities for participating in educational, social and fun activities as well as productive online communication. Furthermore, not all parents wish to play a restrictive role, they would welcome alternative approaches such as active co-use and monitoring.

Livingstone and Helsper (2008), believe that parents might be more involved in guiding their children's Internet use if they found an association between mediation and various positive socialization consequences, in both traditional and new media. Liau, Khoo, and Ang (2008), used different terms for parental mediation on the adolescents Internet use which are: Parental Supervision (sit with the adolescents while online time); Parental Communication (talk with them about what they do on the Internet); and Parental Tracking (check to see which websites the adolescents have visited). Livingstone and Helsper (2008), revealed four factors of parental mediation specifically for internet use, which were labelled as: active co-use, interaction restrictions, technical

restrictions, and monitoring. Later, Duerager and Livingstone (2012), developed a new measurement resulted by analysis of online survey of 25,142 children aged between 9-16 year old in 25 European countries which is also developed specifically about internet using.

4. PARENTAL MEDIATION AND ONLINE GAME ADDICTION

Academic evidence proves that parent activities, have been successful in regulating children's online behavior and mitigating the negative effects of using media. Nowadays teens and youth are considered as affected audience of the Internet and the related industries such as online games. The online game is actually one of the fastest growing and most profitable entertainments in the online world. In a study by Azim, Zam, and Rahman (2010), it was reported that nearly 39% of the respondents used the Internet for non-interactive activities, such as playing computer games. An American study by Shin and Huh (2011), was conducted in order to investigate parental mediation influence on teenagers' video game playing and other types of gaming behaviors. In that study three forms of parental mediation in video game playing were examined which were co-playing, game rating checking, and stopping children from playing games. The results illustrated a weak and negative correlation between teenagers' age and parental mediation. In addition, the findings showed that parents who presumed negative influence of video games were more likely to restrict video game playing with their teenage children. Parental mediation particularly on game rating checking was significantly related to teenagers' game playing and gaming behaviors [14].

Playing online games is not a risky behaviour on its own, however when children keep doing it in an addictive manner it becomes a risky behaviour. Chen (2010), found the factors that contributed to the negative consequences of using online game include time risk, psychological risk, financial risk, physical intangibility, and mental intangibility. In contrary, a study by Latif and Sheard (2009), found that game playing has benefits like improving students' communication skills and social skills. This result was obtained from 341 public school students and 24 teachers from Selangor, Malaysia. In fact, computer games are very popular among Malaysians, especially in younger age and it is accessible too. A study by Zin, Yue, and Jaafar (2009), in the same context indicated that 92% of students have experienced playing digital games whereas, 27.7% of them played games for less than one hour per week and 16.4% played for one hour and more per week. Furthermore, 83.6% of the students stated that they like to play digital or electronic games for fun, while 62.7% play games just to fill up their free time. In general, Malaysian students could benefit in the development of their human skills with a proper choice of computer games [26].

5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Parental mediation has always played the most significant role in decreasing the negative impacts of media and media application on children, however, with today's media children's knowledge and experiences with new media might often surpass those of their parents and that is why the traditional parental mediation methods stand a small chance against the devastating effects of new media.

It is quite possible that the adolescents and young adults who turn to online gaming build up addictive approaches towards this matter of entertainment and later on mix it with gambling and put themselves at the risk of involvement in activities that are associated with gambling such as alcohol abuse and illicit drug taking. At the same time, the extended influence of internet and online games on children and young adults makes the altitudes of the problem even bigger by the fact that the initial stages of such catastrophic events might simply happen right in front of the caring parents at the very restricted time that is given to the child to have some fun on web. Such issues necessitates extra involvement of not only parents but school teachers with such studies to improve their knowledge about new media and the ways that is can affect the children under their care.

With regard to this subject matter there has been also reports of rather contradictory findings on the effects of playing computer games and online gaming as Latif and Sheard (2009), have raised some critically positive reinforcements for such activities, indicating that the versatility of online games in terms of platforms and challenges that the gamers have to go through may eventually improve their social skills. Nonetheless, such studies have also specified that it is not the game that improves the applicants of social skills but the method that they are approached and diffused would play the most important role in that respect and additionally the active role of teachers in proper incorporation of such games specially for the development of students' social skills is crucially significant.

6. RECOMMENDATION AND SUGGESTION

As this paper has discussed, in the case of school-going children in Malaysia, parents' intervention has been the most effective way to reduced negative effects of the Internet and the risk of online game addiction and exposure to child-inappropriate content. However, the fact that efficiency of parents' mediation role is limited to their knowledge and experience about new media necessitates the extension of similar studies that would also involve parents. Similarly, seeking assistance from school authorities and engagement of school teachers in similar interventions seems to improve the dimensions of such prevention attempts.

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