

16. Parental Attention and Children

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Parental Attention and Children's Addiction to Online Games

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Abstract— *Playing online games could promote children's problem solving skill; however, parents need to protect their children when playing online games as it can be addictive. Limited studies have explained about parental attention and children's addiction to online games. This study aimed to analyze the relationship between parental attention and children's addiction to online games. An analytic observational study with a cross-sectional approach was used in this study. Seventy-five schoolchildren in grade 4 and 5 and their parents were chosen based on stratified random sampling. Data analysis was performed using the Rank Spearman correlation coefficient test with significance level of .05. The results showed that there was a strong relationship between parental attention and children's addiction to online games ($p < .05$). Parental attention could reduce children's addiction to online games. It is recommended that parents should be aware of negative effects of excessive online games.*

Keywords— *Parental Attention; Children's Addiction; Online Games*

I. INTRODUCTION

Playing online games could promote children's problem solving skills; however, parents need to protect their children when playing online games. Online games can be addictive, as it provides easy games to play, unlimited access, and endless fun. Often children use gaming platforms actually designed for adults [1], sometimes parents even deliberately provide these facilities for their children [2]. Online games are proven to improve children's cognitive function, the ability to make decisions, practice hand and eye movements, including spatial abilities, and develop cooperation [3]. Someone who had been addicted to the internet poses higher risk of emotional insecurity, and being dependent on what other people post on social media [4]. Other risks include suffering from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) [5],[6], depression, anxiety, involvement in criminal groups, pornography, gambling, radicalism and terrorism [7].

Previous study has stated that there is a relationship between children's addiction to the internet with game addiction [8]. Two-thirds of all households with school-age children have computers at home, and around 59% of them are used to play online games. Leisure boredom was associated with the high risk of internet addiction, thus parents should improve their activities together and provide support for the children. Parental monitoring is an important factor in reducing internet addiction [9], [5].

Internet technology has provided a variety of benefits for millions of gamers around the world. Online games encourage virtual communities, provide motivational support, and build social interaction. In addition to this, several types of games provide various incentives and rewards for players. About two-fifths of gamers often play social games

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(39%), which is higher than action games or puzzle/board/card games. This shows that social interaction is an important motivator for gamers to start and maintain the game [10]. Based on Indonesia's digital data report in January 2019, Indonesia's population is 268.2 million. The number of cell phone users was about 355.5 million, the percentage of mobile phone being 133% greater than the total population of Indonesia. Almost all Indonesian internet users (98%) use the internet to watch online videos, access television content through the internet (50%), enjoy playing online games (46%) and watch streaming videos (36%) [11].

Factors related to children's addiction to online games include environmental factors, peers, and lack of parental supervision. Addiction to playing online games may lead to compulsive behavior, difficulty to stop playing games and forgetting day-to-day activities, as well as interpersonal and health-related problems [12],[13].

Parental attachment and encouragement develop children's independent identities; hence, parents must provide a safe and supportive family environment to prevent children from being addicted to the internet [14]. It is also important that parents ensure their children are in a safe and caring environment, provide education, attention and other aspects of their lives [15]. Playing online games could promote children's problem solving skills; however, parents need to protect their children when playing online games as it can be addictive. Limited studies have explained about parental attention and children's addiction to online games. This study is aimed to analyze the relationship between parental attention and children's addiction to online games.

AI. METHODS

An analytic observational study with a cross-sectional approach was used in this study. Seventy-five schoolchildren in grade 4 and 5 and their parents were chosen based on stratified random sampling. Inclusion criteria included children and parents living together; and having at least one equipment, either computers, laptops, or smartphones. Questionnaires were used to measure parental attention (Parenting Questionnaire) and children's addiction to online games (Addiction Game Scale) [16]. This study was approved by the Ethical Board of Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Nahdlatul Ulama, Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia. Data analysis was performed using the Rank Spearman correlation coefficient test with significance level of .05.

BI. RESULTS

- General characteristics of respondents

As can be seen in Table 1, 56% of parents were aged between 36-45 years old, 52% of them were mothers, and more than half of respondents (53.3%) had a senior high school; 40% of children were 10 years old, 58.7% of them were girls, and more than half (58.7%) had their own gadget.

Table 1. General characteristics of respondents (n=75)

Category	n	%
Parents' age		
17 – 25	0	0
26 – 35	23	30.7
36 – 45	42	56
46 – 55	10	13.3
Parents' gender		
Male	36	48

Category	n	%
Female	39	52
Parents' Education Level		
Elementary school	6	8
Junior High School	17	22.7
Senior High School	40	53.3
College/University	12	16
Children age (years old)		
9	1	1.3
10	30	40
11	27	36
12	17	22.7
Children gender		
Male	31	41.3
Female	44	58.7
Gadget ownership		
Parents	31	41.3
Children	44	58.7

- Parental Attention and Children's Addiction to Online Games

Table 2 shows that 65.3% of parents had moderate attention to their children. Meanwhile, one-third of children (33.3%) had addiction to online games, and more than half had no addiction (66.7%) to online games.

Table 2. Parental Attention and Children's Addiction to Online Games (n=75)

Variables	n	%
Parental Attention		
Less	0	0
Moderate	49	65.3
Good	26	34.7
Children's Addiction to Online Games		
No addiction	50	66.7
Addiction	25	33.3

- Relationships between Parental Attention and Children's Addiction to Online Games

The results from Table 3 describe that there is a strong relationship between parental attention and children's addiction to online games ($p < .05$). It shows that parental attention should be improved in order to reduce children's addiction to online games.

Table 3. Relationships Between Parental Attention and Children's Addiction to Online Games (n=75)

Parental Attention	Children's Addiction to Online Games				P value
	Addiction		No addiction		
	n	%	n	%	
Less	0	0	0	0	0.000
Enough	6	24	43	86	
Good	19	76	7	14	

IV. DISCUSSION

The internet is most commonly used for social interaction, interactive games, educational purpose, business, shopping and much more [17],[18],[19]. However, the internet has many negative effects on social aspects, security threats, and addiction. It is a very challenging task to protect children from addiction to the internet. This study showed that more than half of children had their own gadgets; it means that they can access the internet all the time. Sometimes people also "steal" Wi-Fi signals near coffee shops that provide wireless internet facilities [7].

Even though that more than half of children had no addiction (66.7%) to online games, there were still some issues in children (33.3%) who had addiction to online games. Addiction to online games was defined as the usage of online games for more than four hours per day. Respondents in this study explained that online games were great fun. However, online games also had negative effects on social interaction, and respondents stated that they had a fight with other children while playing online games, and were unable to stop playing online games. Based on DSM-5 classification, the internet gaming disorder is similar to pathological gambling which can be seen in the following criteria: (a) engrossed in internet gaming; (b) withdrawal symptoms when the internet game is stopped; (c) tolerance: the need to increase the amount of time; (d) failed attempts to control participation in internet games; (e) losing interest in hobbies and entertainment as a result of internet games; (f) continue to use internet games excessively despite knowledge of psychosocial issues; (g) deceiving family members, therapists, or others regarding the number of internet games played; (h) use internet games to escape or eliminate negative moods; and (i) losing significant relationships, jobs, or educational or career opportunities due to participation in internet games [20].

Based on the Spearman Rank test results with significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), the correlation coefficient value of 0.67 means that there is a strong relationship between parental attention and children's addiction to online games. Parents are expected to provide a supportive environment so their children can develop skills and ability naturally through their culture. Parents should also take appropriate measures to ensure that their children are in a safe, caring and stimulating-home environment [21],[22],[23]. Inadequate parental attention to the use of appropriate gadgets can pose risks other than addiction, possible risk of repetitive motion injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome, dryness of the eyes due to insufficient blinking, headaches, and blurred vision [21],[23],[24].

Previous research conducted by Lin *et al.* also showed that parental monitoring can prevent teens from becoming addicted to internet usage. In addition to this, parental monitoring was found to be significantly negatively related to adolescent boredom ($p < .001$), and their participation in social activities ($p < .001$) and the internet ($p < .05$), yet it was positively associated with participation in family activities ($p < .001$). In fact, adolescents with social interaction issues and lack of parental support tend to be addicted to the internet [25],[26]. Therefore, it is necessary to involve parents and teachers in preventing online games and internet addiction [17],[9]. The weakness of this study is the limited population; in order to raise a significant value, larger samples are needed to improve the relationship between variables.

V. CONCLUSION

Parental attention could reduce children's addiction to online games. It is recommended that parents should be aware of negative effects of excessive online games.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interest have been declared.

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