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Analysis of the relationship between Saudi Arabia parents' education and economic levels and parental control of internet usage

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Abstract

This paper examined the relationship between parents' educational level in Saudi families and the level of their control of their children's internet usage. It also broadly identified the impact of Saudi families' economic level on their control of internet use by their children. This study also tried to describe and explain the problem and its impact on the family. By analysing these two social variables, the paper clarified the conflict between conservative Islamic way of bringing children up against their exposure to the wild possibilities of internet surfing. The technological revolution continues to be a bone of contention in an Arabic speaking country where social norms are governed by tight religious teachings. The paper used the descriptive method to interpret phenomena. Several methods were used to collect data; questionnaires for younger and older participants and interviews for parents only. The study sample consisted of parents from different social backgrounds and primary school children from different parts of Riyadh. The results of this study will help policy makers to understand parental education and economic levels and how these influence children's surfing habits. This is a preliminary scientific study for children and the Internet in Saudi Arabia to discuss these variables in detail.

Keywords: digital native; digital immigrants; technological savvy; digital residents; digital competence; children online

1. Introduction

Background

The last half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty first century has witnessed a huge information revolution; this period has become to be known as the information age. This information revolution resulted in huge progress in both telecommunication and computer fields which has led to facilitation of most daily practices and activities people perform. This expansion of computer application range in particular after the spread of PCs became substantial, not only by small and large establishments but also by family members as well. Computers perform many tasks accurately and quickly. Therefore, they became popular gadgets especially among the younger generation who has been labeled

as 'digital natives' (Valcke et al 2010). The suggestion that a lot of parents are not 'digital natives' presents challenges in the way they control internet use of their children. Examples of these challenges will be illustrated in the literature review. The big question is; Does education and a high economic level mean that parents assume the '**digital native**' status?

The Saudi community and the rest of the world have been affected by the new information age phenomena. Naturally, new phenomena arising in other communities do find their way to this community. An interesting study into the use of the internet in one of Saudi Arabia's hospitals was carried out in 1999. There had been a suggestion that the use of the internet in the hospital was proving to be against the social norms of the nation (Alminshawi 2003). A study was carried out by the above author about the initiative taken by King Faisal Specialist Hospital to use the internet for scientific research and medical services. This institution was the first to incorporate the invasive use of the internet in all its proceedings. The main objective of the King's scheme was to improve health care services in the country. However, the results of this study suggested that an overwhelming amount of use of the internet in this hospital was not in line with the religious expectations. The results suggested that 93% of internet use in this particular hospital were for purposes that degraded religious and moral values like access to pornography websites yet only 3% was used for scientific and research purposes. On the other hand 4% of the usage was for other different purposes like personal emails and Skype communication (Alminshawi, 2003). Therefore; the scale of internet misuse in Saudi Arabia is clearly high following the above study.

This research hopes to increase the knowledge and awareness of the need from the family to safeguard children when they are using information and communications technology, especially the educated, and high earners who might not usually spend relatively long time with their children due to academic, professional and business commitments

A close review of available literature suggests that a western country takes a serious approach to the use of the internet by young people. This is evident in the availability of different types of software to help keep children safe online. However, Saudi Arabia's efforts are still limited and the available laws are not as comprehensive as those in western countries.

Western studies also focus primarily on children's issues and the internet, while studies in Saudi Arabia focus on the use of the internet at university and high school children. Some studies focus on the use of children's online games which may lead to isolation and addiction. Others have concentrated on what impact the computers have on children. Also discussed in some studies are the advantages and disadvantages of using the internet.

The researcher believes that this study will contribute significantly to the development of the database of those interested in studying children's activities. It will encourage more research in this area. Also, parents will also benefit in that it might boost their knowledge and confidence of closely monitoring their children while online.

2. Literature Review

Preamble

To date, research on the use of the internet by children has focused mainly on the impact of the internet on the character formation as will be explained by examples given below in this proposal. However, such research has been limited in scope in how much parents control their children in the usage of the internet. A few studies dedicated to the level of family control levels have been done in Europe and the US. The researcher is not aware of any studies done in Saudi Arabia. The focus on parents has been generic. This study is different because it focuses on two specific variable; economic and education levels. The literature to be reviewed in this thesis will cover Arabic authors' works as well as the works of authors in the Western world. Other continents except for China and Japan in East Asia have not had extensive research in the area of technology. This could be influenced by the fact that the internet has not been widely available to the children due to inhibiting costs.

Literature on parental control has so far concentrated on the effects of internet consumption on children. A few have looked at parental control but with the emphasis on parenting styles. Some studies have linked internet consumption with obesity. Lindsey et. al (2006) suggests that the control of the use of the internet needs a multi-faceted approach with the parents working hand in hand with other agencies of social control like the Police, religious organizations and Children's welfare organisations. They suggest that early intervention is the best hence the need to start monitoring internet use at an early age. Barkin (2006) in Valcke et al (2010: 460) on the other hand asserts that "Little is known about parents' role in mediating their children's media use". This gap in research has influenced me to investigate the level of parental control in the Saudi community. Some studies have highlighted that parents with sound knowledge of the internet are more conscious of the risks associated with usage and are bound to be more vigilant in checking on their children's surfing habits and they are most likely to put tighter controls. Duimel and Haran (2007) in Valcke et. al (2010) point out that the number of children in the family is bound to have an impact in controlling surfing habits. Valcke et. al (2010) maintains that 30% of UK and US families remain physically present whenever their children use internet while others use software to block what they deem to be inappropriate. In addition these authors highlight that other parents go to the extent of checking their children's browsing history, who they are chatting with and for how long.

One interesting study on parental control focused on the benefits and potential dangers of online gaming. ESRB (2008) advises parents to take the lead when their children are setting up their games consoles for the first time. This would enable the adults to enforce strict parental control settings like setting up a password and a pin for the child's safety. This advice giving brochure also advises parents to play the first online game in their child's absence to check the suitability of illustrations and language that their children are potentially exposed to while playing the game online. This is in agreement with Lindsey et al's (2006) suggestion that a bird's eye view is necessary in order to protect children from potential harm. This harm could be in the form of sexual predators (ESRB 2008; Lindsey et al 2006) and use of inappropriate language (ESRB 2008). The inappropriate language, according to the same text may be triggered by the unknown identity of the other players which might influence players to use obscene language at each other at any point in the game. This document gives an interesting analogy of the online gaming world and the real life playground. It asserts that the threats are

similar but in the virtual world the effects may be more severe because the perpetrators of abuse may not be known as they can easily disguise themselves.

Parental Guidance

Cranmer (2006) completed a significant study of how families use the internet in the family home. The study explores the discourses of power relations. In the study, Cranmer (2006) states that the internet is usually used in a narrow way and as part of daily routines. The way in which parents regulate the use of the internet at home has a bearing on preventing children from safety. Cranmer (2006) asserts that some scholars claim that the internet technology is undermining the family and childhood institutions. Tony Blair, speaking in the 2003 e-summit cited that the proficient use of ICT can be viewed as a way of combating adult illiteracy. It can be argued that parents who are computer literate can give better guidance to their children because they are well aware of what is involved in the use of the internet. Moreover, most children have become digital natives and they have been known to change family passwords on the computer against their parents' knowledge hence parents need to be aware of all the security features and not only to know how to use the internet.

Papert (1996) in Cranmer (2006) purports that children need to be allowed to develop their creativity by being given the freedom to surf the internet and manipulate ICT functions. However, this freedom brings with it many drawbacks like parental concerns and it may put children's lives at risk in some cases. If not controlled, the freedom to surf as much as is possible without parental controls may cause addiction. A MORI survey carried out in 2003 on the fears of internet safety to the children revealed that 90% of the adults feared for the safety of their children online. Rideout (2007) refutes this claim by claiming that the proportion of parents who are worried about contents that can potentially corrupt their children has gone down in the past decade, even though she admits that the number is still high. According to the study which she carried out for the Kaiser Foundation, the percentage of parents who are 'very' worried about this is 51%.

Child safety organisations continue to work hard to ensure that children are safe online and also that parents are educated on the ways of keeping children safe online. Some websites such as 'thinkyouknow.co.uk' advise parents on what they should do in case they notice something which is suspicious while using the internet. Apart from the usual fears of sexual inappropriateness, the other danger facing children is that of terrorism (Cranmer, 2006; Rideout, 2007). Children can be lured into terrorism when they innocently visit websites they think hold positive values of their religion. If not closely monitored, or in cases where children and parents do not openly discuss their children's surfing habits it might take a while for parents to be aware of potentially dangerous information that their children are sharing with strangers online.

Different families ascribe different values to the use of the internet. The parents' belief about the value of the internet in their children's lives tends to influence the way they limit or regulate or guide their children in the use of the internet (Cranmer, 2006). Many parents view the internet as a tool that will help their children enhance their children's learning in terms of supporting them with their homework (Rideout, 2007). Despite putting the family at the centre of the children's safety, children are left at the mess of the internet cafes where there are no age

limits. That goes without saying that in such places children can surf whatever they want even if inappropriate. A Kaiser foundation parent survey (2007) on children's consumption of the media suggested that a lot of parents felt that they have control over what children watch when they are at home but they become concerned about what they watch when they are away from home like when they visit their friends. This is something that they do not have control of.

In contrast, the UK government does take stringent measures to ensure that children are kept safe online. For example, most local authority libraries in Leicester have separate ICT workstations for children and adults and children are strictly forbidden to use the computers reserved for adults. Even though a family is one of the major institutions of primary socialisation it is nonetheless an important area of social control. In the UK and US there is currently a public concern that family values are depreciating and that the internet is one of the causes as children are learning all sorts of different things which they do not get either from school or their parents or siblings (Gelle 1995). (Gelle in Cranmer, 2006:24) asserts that "... the family remains a powerful social institution alongside education, economics, religion and politics which has retained its influence on attitudes, feelings and behaviours". Generally, families influence who we become in the future or what we turn out to be despite the fact that there are other social structures and peer pressure impacting on the value formation of young people. A functional view of the family suggests that families have a role to regulate the behaviours of all of its members. The functional view of the family has been dissected in the assertion that some families are more functional for some members of the family than others (Cranmer 2006). In regards to internet use families are expected to exercise fairness and have clear boundaries and expectations equally for all the children. Power relations in families are an important aspect in monitoring the use of the internet. A typical dysfunctional family would exercise unequal power relations to different children.

The new Generation of children and the internet

This section is mainly based on Prensky's (2001, 2009, 2010, 2011) essays on the competence of today's children. Ibid (2001) asserts that the young people of the 21st Century are **digital natives** and the older generation are **digital immigrants**. The young people understand the language of modern technology better than the older generation. This has an implication on how parents control the use of the internet by their children. It can be argued that being native speakers of the digital technology language, the younger people are naturally placed in a more powerful position compared to their parents or grandparents. This analogy puts the younger generation and the older in juxtaposition. Generally, the older generation tends to ask for technology help from younger people. This may not be true for children who live in less technologically developed countries. For instance, children socialised in Saudi Arabia may not be as **technological savvy** as those in western countries like America and the United Kingdom. However, the world is revolving and with the Macdonaldisation of nation states (Held & McGrew, 2000) children in the more conservative countries is becoming savvier. Young people in Korea have been reported to be addicted to the internet. Researchers have argued that the reason why many young people have turned to the internet is because Korea tends to place societal values before the needs of individual's hence young people have turned to the virtual world to express themselves to a listening audience. This apparent alienation by one's society has apparently turned Korean children to the abyss of finding solace (BBC, 2012).

Prensky (2010) explains different users of the internet. These are digital natives, digital visitors, digital immigrants and **digital residents**. Most children in developed countries would fit in the category of digital natives while those in developing countries would be visitors or even immigrants.

Being a digital native has a benefit that if used well, the internet opens the whole world to young people as they can get answers to their numerous questions. However, as mentioned above, reliance may lead to addiction. Parents should guard against this addiction stage by putting clear boundaries on the use of internet at home. Prensky (2001) suggests that the effect of the use of the internet on children ultimately depends on how the older generation supports and guides the younger people to interact with new technology. Parents as early socialisers of their children need to take an interest in their children's surfing habits.

(Prensky, 2009) argues that banning the use of internet and new technologies kills the children's creativity and denies them opportunities to express themselves and meet other young people around the world. Controlling the use of internet needs not be banning, for instance Prensky (2009) challenges parents and guardians to give 4 year olds an iPod if they asked for one. He argues, using his own child as a case study, that the use of such gadgets enthralls the child's curiosity and gives children to learn interactively using games and visual images. Prensky (2009) points out that there a lot of opportunities for children to exploit by using for an example of an iPod. Like the traditional classroom the iPod can allow children to practice their reading and writing.

While Prensky's conceptions about digital natives and digital immigrants are valid, they cannot go unchallenged. He tends to make a generalisation about children living in modern societies. It can be argued that while America is a world power, not all children have the same exposure to the internet and the high level of **digital competence** so his idea of teachers using the digital native methodology to teach lessons might not be suitable for all children. Teachers need to cater for all learning styles (Skerry, 2000). Some children prefer the printed paper to reading texts on the screen. Also, he seems to ignore children with different conditions like epilepsy and varying degrees of visual impairment. His argument of paying less attention to 'legacy content' falls short of acknowledging the importance of providing children with good elementary education and basic reading and writing skills (including handwriting). Not all methodology used in the past is irrelevant for today's classroom. International students studying at UK universities come from some developing countries where technology is scarce but they manage to excel in modern universities learning alongside digital natives. Legacy content like critical thinking and research skills has been widely replicated in the digital world. The difference between what Prensky calls legacy and future content is thus not radically different.

3. Methodology

Descriptive Research

Sarantakos (1998) summarises the definition of descriptive research by describing it as a common type of research that can be an exploration of the phenomena. He says it describes social relations and events and also gives historical information about the issue being investigated. This research will give a brief description of internet use in Saudi Arabia and how it has gained popularity in the country. Sekaran (2003) explores the benefits of using descriptive research; He asserts that it helps the researcher to fully comprehend characteristics of the participants and phenomena. In addition, it helps the researcher to think logically about different aspects in any given scenario. Moreover, it provides clues for future research. However, Kelley et al (2003 p.261) maintain that the descriptive researcher “aims to observe (gather information on) certain phenomena, typically at a single point in time: the cross sectional survey. The aim is to examine each case by describing important factors associated with it such as, demographic, socio-economic and health characteristics, events, behaviours, attitudes, experiences and knowledge”. Selective sampling of participants aims to get diverse views from parents and children from different economic and social backgrounds within Riyadh. Riyadh was chosen because it is the most multicultural city in Saudi Arabia.

This study aims to explore ‘what is’ the situation (Punch, 2005) in relation to how parents view internet use by children and also how they control their children’s surfing habits. Many studies about internet use in Saudi Arabia have paid more attention to the effects of internet exposure, gaming and social networking. As stated in the research proposal, internet use by children in Saudi Arabia is not closely regulated like it is in the western world. It is against this assertion that parents’ involvement in controlling their children on the internet is of interest for the study.

Development of questionnaires

Like the interviews, questionnaires are commonly used in social research (Sarantakos, 1998; Sekaran, 2003). The questionnaires will be used to triangulate information gathering methods. Wiersma (1986 p.179) describes the questionnaire as “a list of questions or statement to which the individual is asked to respond in writing; the response may range from a checkmark to an extensive written statement”.

The design of questionnaires for parents and for the children was influenced by recommendations by Oliver’s (2004) methodology and theory. They are also designed in accordance with the required data obtained from respondents. The first set of questions aims to obtain preliminary information like personal details while the second set will be aimed at measuring the level of family control. There were (25) questions for parents and (23) for children. This is considerable length. Oliver advises against lengthy questionnaires because participants might lose interest and probably not complete them. If too short, some important information might be missed. The language used can be easily understood. Questionnaires (and information sheets) have been written in child friendly language and illustrations. Questions are clear and ambiguity has been avoided. The questionnaires use nominal measures that allow participants to choose alternatives for responses (Denscombe, 2010). There is a mixture of

multiple choice questions, Yes/No responses. No open ended questions were asked to avoid complicating the data analysis process.

Sample

A random sample was drawn from a selection of both state and private school in the city of Riyadh, capital of Saudi Arabia, in February 2013. Though time consuming and comparably more expensive than other methods, it is a more reliable method in terms of representativeness of data (Guy, 1987). Child participants included both genders. The schools were selected at random from all the districts of the city of Riyadh. This was done so the results would be representative of the ethos of each district. It should be noted that even though these schools are in the same city, parental values may be different in each district as may be influenced by factors such as average income or level of education. 36 primary schools in total were chosen. These included public (state) schools and private schools. It was felt that the inclusion of private school children would provide a broader and more representative view of the studied phenomena. The location of participants was executed by the head teachers who passed on the questionnaires to children at school and asked them to pass on some to their parents. This was done randomly, with the head teacher giving out all the allocated number of questionnaires to randomly selected class groups.

All children attended school regularly and parents included mothers and fathers of different income levels and education levels ranged from illiterate to post graduate. Some parents, especially mothers were unemployed, while some fathers ran their own businesses. The youngest parents were below 30 years while the oldest were above 46. A few parents (both mothers and fathers) were retired. Some parents gave no responses in the age, education and occupation categories. 90% of the children were from public (state) schools while just fewer than 10% were privately educated. Less than 2% gave no response on type of education. Over 47% were boys and just over 50% were girls. Few did not give responses. Since all children were above 10 years old, it was assumed that they had adequate literacy skills to complete the questionnaires to an acceptable standard. None of the parents were known to the researcher before the data was collected.

A total of 1500 questionnaires were distributed (750 for children and the other 750 for parents). Of these, 700 from children and 465 from parents were returned, bringing the total sample size down to 1165. The majority of parents ranged between 31-45 years of age, while 62% of the children were aged 12. The rationale for a huge sample was because Riyadh is a huge city with over 5 million inhabitants. Random sampling is representative so as to comprehend the characteristics of Riyadh populace.

Gay (1987) asserts that "Random sampling is the best single way to obtain a representative sample. No technique, not even random sampling, *and guarantees* a representative sample, but the probability is higher for this procedure than for any other. (p 104).

4. Data Analysis and Findings

Education level

The level of education for parents was classified into six categories. According to the level of father's education, Table 1 and Figure 1 showed that parents who finished their university represent the largest group where it was 41.7% for fathers and 38.1% for mothers. Then, secondary school came second with 23.4% for fathers and 29.9% for mothers. The percentage of fathers holding postgraduate qualification which was 16.3 % was much higher than mothers which are 6.2%. Parents showed the same percentage of intermediate education (8.6%). Regarding elementary education, the percentage of mother which was 11.6% is much higher than the percentage of fathers which was 3.9%.

The education level of parents	Father		Mothers	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Illiterate	7	1.5	20	4.3
Elementary	18	3.9	54	11.6
Intermediate	40	8.6	40	8.6
Secondary	109	23.4	139	29.9
University Graduate	194	41.7	177	38.1
Postgraduate (master's or PhD)	76	16.3	29	6.2
No response	21	4.5	6	1.3
Total	465	100.0	465	100.0

Table 1 Parent's level of education

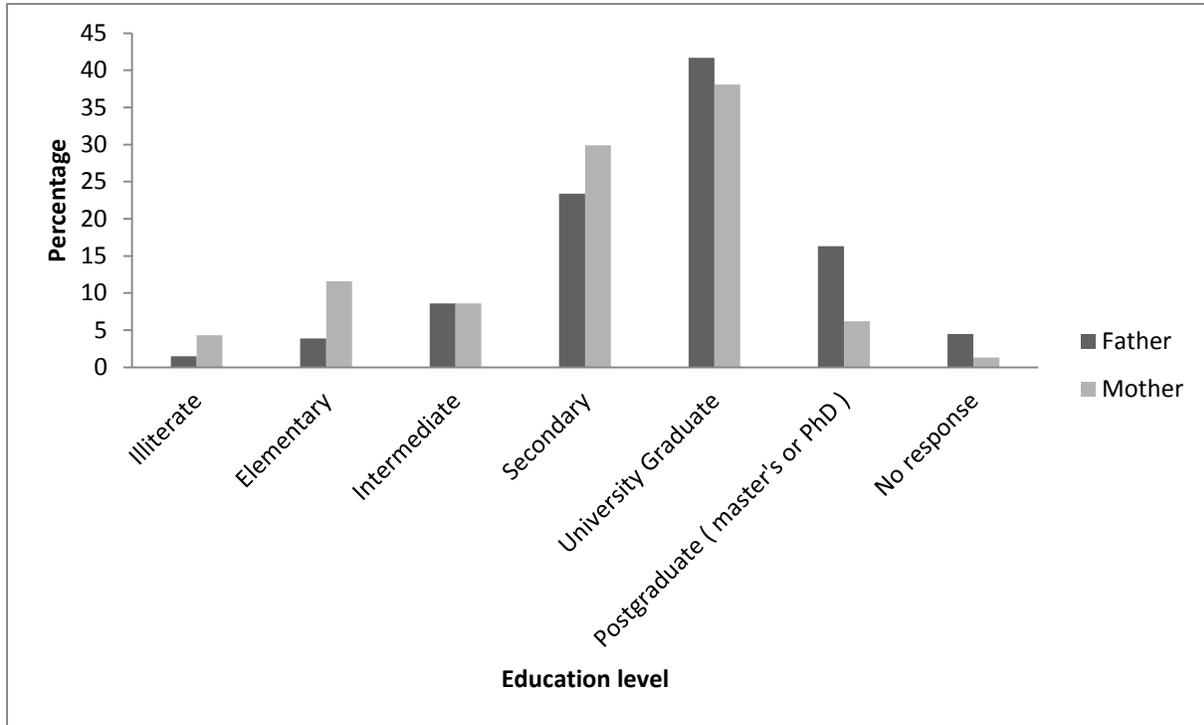


Figure 1 Distribution parents level of education

Parent’s Occupation

The occupation of parents was classified into five categories as given in Table 2 and Figure 2. Fathers who were employees in the government sector were observed to dominate the sample (55.5%). On the other hand, mothers showed lower percentage (24.7%) than fathers. Private sector employees came second for fathers with somewhat lower percentage (17.0%), while it came third for mothers (3.2%). Businessman and businesswomen category were represented by small percentage (8.4 for fathers and 0.2% for mothers). Finally, the unemployed fathers were the smallest group (2.6%); it was the highest for mothers (68.8%). The results show a high percentage of unemployed women even though most of them are educated at degree level (see fig.1). This can be explained in cultural terms where Saudi society expects women to take care of the children and also, high percentage of men (their husbands) are employed or running businesses(see fig.2) running a family is relatively easy on one income.

Statement	Father		Mothers	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Unemployed	12	2.6	320	68.8
Retired	61	13.1	9	1.9
Private sector employee	79	17.0	15	3.2
Government employee	258	55.5	115	24.7
Businessman	39	8.4	1	.2
No response	16	3.4	5	1.1
Total	465	100.0	465	100.0

Table 2 Distribution of parent's Occupation

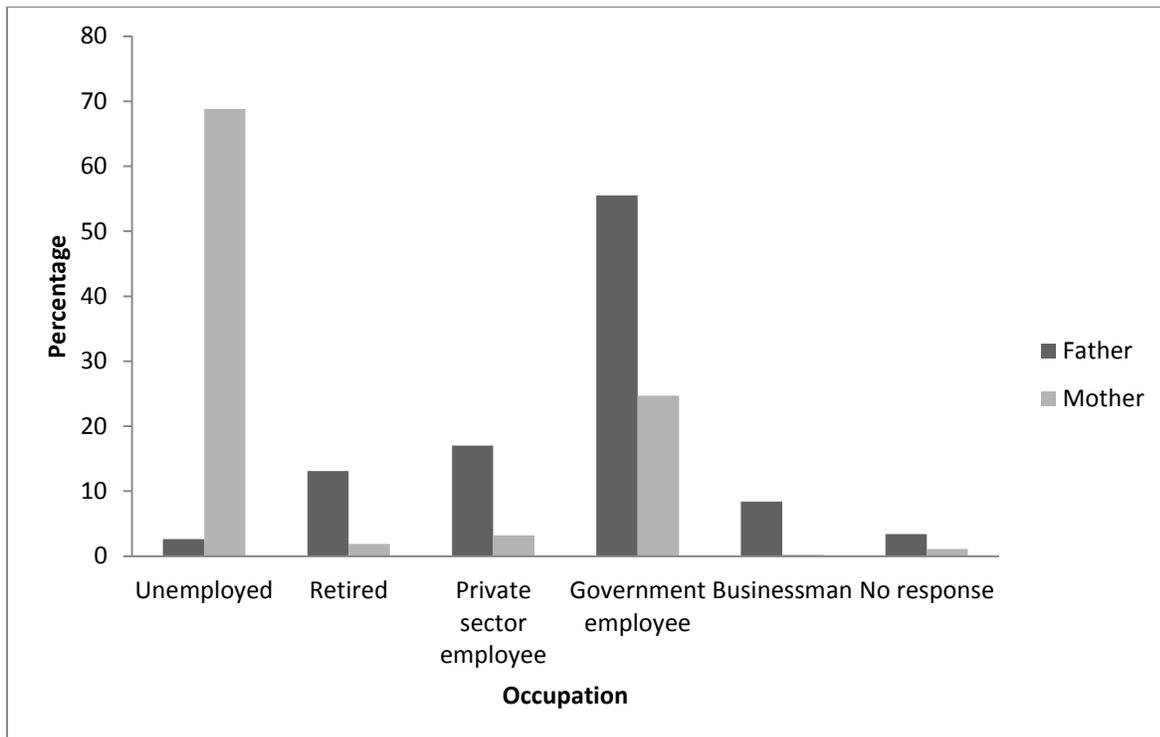


Figure 2 Distribution occupations for parents

Parents' monthly income

Table 3 and Figure 3 show the income distribution for four groups. The highest percentage was distributed between 5000-10000 RS (33.3%) and more than 15000 RS, which high income group, (30.5%), respectively. Families with low income which is less than 5000 SR show the smallest percentage (12.9%). Also, Riyadh is the capital city where the highest number of billionaires and other upper middle class live. The highest paying jobs in the country are in Riyadh, this is explained by the second highest frequency of more than 15 000 SR. Most of the sampled parents are between the 30s to 40s, hence the highest frequency of the 5000-10 000 SR monthly income. The parents are young and with only a few years' experience in the employment industry.

Monthly household income	Freq.	%
less than 5000 SR	60	12.9
5000 – 10000 SR	155	33.3
10001 – 15000 SR	80	17.2
More than 15000 SR	142	30.5
No response	28	6.0
Total	465	100.0

Table 3 Monthly household incomes

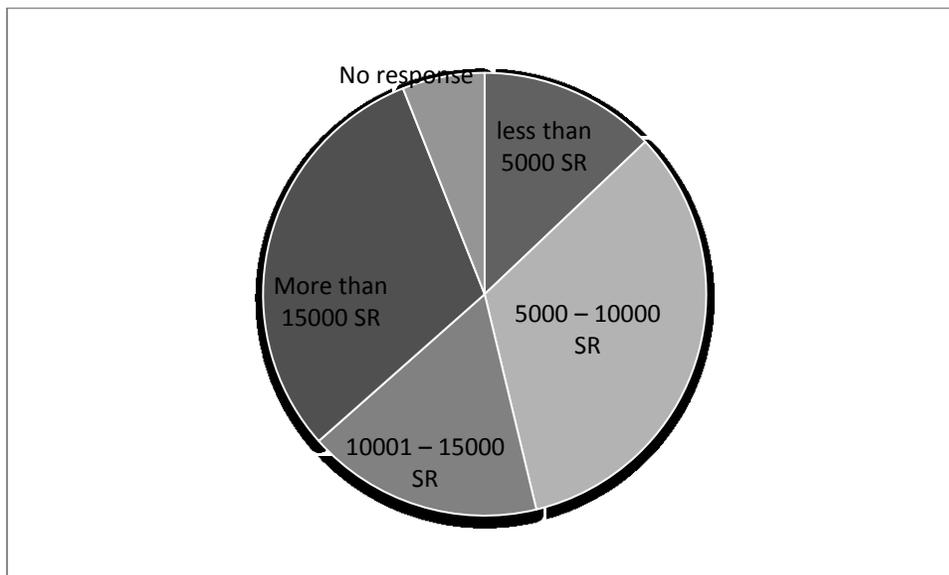


Figure 3 Distribution of family income

ANOVA between father level of education and study measures

ANOVA test indicates that there is a significant effect of father level of education on single study measures: Parents’ knowledge about internet used (F= 6.453, p=0.000). These results suggest that father level of education has an effect on Parents' knowledge about internet use.

Sections of study measures	F
Knowledge about internet risk on children	0.389 (0.856) *
Parents' knowledge about internet use	6.453 (0.000) *
Level of parental control on children's internet use	1.393 (0.226) *
Risk of websites on children	1.665 (0.142) *
*p value	

Table 4 ANOVA between father level of education and study measures.

The mean score plot signifies that the mean score of parents knowledge about internet use of illiterate parent (M = 16.286, SD = 6.237) is significantly different than parent with postgraduate degree (M = 20.63, SD = 5.972). The results suggest that parents with higher level of education have more knowledge about the internet than lower level of educated parents.

ANOVA between father occupation and study measures

ANOVA test indicates that there is a significant effect of father occupation on single study measures: Parents’ knowledge about internet use (F = 7.036, p=0.000). These results suggest that father occupation has an effect on Parents' knowledge about internet use.

Sections of study measures	F
Knowledge about internet risk on children	1.305 (0.267) *
Parents' knowledge about internet use	7.241 (0.000) *
Level of parental control on children's internet use	0.330 (0.857) *
Risk of websites on children	1.426 (0.225) *
*p value	

Table 5 ANOVA between father occupation and study measures.

The mean score plot signifies that the mean score of parents knowledge about internet use of unemployed parent (M = 14.181, SD = 5.828) is significantly different than parent in government employment (M = 20.202, SD = 5.848). The results suggest that unemployed parents on the average have less knowledge about the use of internet than employed parents.

ANOVA between mother level of education and study measures

ANOVA test indicates that there is a significant effect of mother level of education on two variables of study measures: Parents' knowledge about internet use (F = 4.107, p = 0.001) and Risk of websites on children (F = 2.320, p = 0.043). These results suggest that mother level of education has an effect on parents' knowledge about internet use and risk of websites on children.

Sections of study measures	F
Knowledge about internet risk on children	0.337 (0.891) *
Parents' knowledge about internet use	4.107 (0.001) *
Level of parental control on children's internet use	0.901 (0.480) *
Risk of websites on children	2.320 (0.043) *
*p value	

Table 6 ANOVA between mother level of education and study measures.

The mean score plot signifies that the mean score of knowledge about internet use of illiterate mothers (M = 14.737, SD = 6.674) is significantly different than mothers with postgraduate degree (M = 21.464, SD = 5.534). Also, the mean score of risk of websites on children of illiterate mothers (M = 11.833, SD = 5.993) is significantly different than mothers with postgraduate degree (M = 8.852, SD = 2.316). The higher the mean value of risky website means low level of risk.

These results suggest that illiterate mothers who have little or almost no knowledge of the use of internet are relatively less aware of the risky websites. These mothers tend to put less effective controls measures as they are not aware of the danger of adult contents and extremism. On the other hand, the higher educational level mothers take more effective measures to check their children internet surfing behaviour.

ANOVA between mother’s occupation and study measures

ANOVA test indicates that there is a significant effect of mother’s occupation on two variables of study measures: Parents' knowledge about internet use (F = 2.600, p = 0.036) and Risk of websites on children (F = 3.324, p = 0.011).

These results suggest that mother’s occupation has an effect on parents' knowledge about internet use and risk of websites on children.

Sections of study measures	F
Knowledge about internet risk on children	0.876 (0.478) *
Parents' knowledge about internet use	2.600 (0.036) *
Level of parental control on children's internet use	1.677 (0.154) *
Risk of websites on children	3.324 (0.011) *
*p value	

Table 7 ANOVA between mother’s occupation and study measures.

The mean score plot signifies that the mean score of knowledge about internet use of full time mothers (M = 18.404, SD = 6.128) is significantly different than mothers with within government employee category (M = 20.321, SD = 5.864). Also, the mean score of risk of websites on children of full time mothers (M = 9.632, SD = 3.734) is significantly different than mothers with within government employee category (M = 8.849, SD = 2.884). The higher the mean value of risky website means low level of risk.

These results suggest that on the average full time mother are less aware of the internet use and the risky websites than those mothers in the employment. These mothers tend to put less effective controls as they are not aware of the danger and existence of adult contents and extremism. On the other hand, the higher educational level mothers take more effective measures to check their children internet surfing behaviour.

ANOVA between monthly income and study measures

ANOVA test indicates that there is a significant effect of monthly income on single study measure: Level of parental control on children's internet use (F = 3.898, p = 0.009).

Sections of study measures	F
Knowledge about internet risk on children	2.098 (0.100) *
Parents' knowledge about internet use	1.693 (0.168) *
Level of parental control on children's internet use	3.898 (0.009) *
Risk of websites on children	1.687 (0.169) *
*p value	

Table 8 ANOVA between monthly income and study measures.

The mean score plot signifies that the mean score of level of parental control on children's internet use with income category of 5000 – 10,000 SR ($M = 10.589$, $SD = 2.897$) is significantly different than category of more than 15,000 SR ($M = 11.290$, $SD = 4.140$).

These results suggest that on the average families with income categories lower than 15,000 SR are less aware of the level of control that can be in place to protect their children against the internet risk they face.

Discussion

This section provides an overarching view of the research. It includes the statement of the problem and the methodology used to collect data. The theories of collectivism and individualism (Triandis, 2002) are used to explain some of the responses. Also analysed is the Social Cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986).

The use of the internet in a conservative society like Saudi Arabia continues to be a controversial issue and parents are continuously being pressured into monitoring their children's surfing habits. The main question of this study was to examine the relationship between parents' educational and economic levels in Saudi families and the level of their control of their children's internet use. The results suggest that parents' level of education had no significant effect on how they control their children on the internet. This calls for new ways of approaching the problem as widely held assumption suggested that parents with lower level of education lacked control. Similarly, no significant differences were noted in the categories of parental occupation and ages. This study highlights the need for parents to be more approachable so that more children can share their internet experiences with them, instead of preferring to share with siblings, especially sisters (32%). It is interesting to note that fathers were second favourites to share information with 30% of children choosing the male parent. The 7% affirmative for mothers highlights the need for education and awareness programmes targeted especially to mothers. The result is unexpected, especially in a patriachial society where women are expected to possess nurturing qualities and men expected to maintain an emotional distance from their children. Parents need to understand that the bulk of the solutions to the dangers of the internet lies in them discussing issues openly with their children and identifying any underlying issues with the use of the internet. The researcher acknowledges the limitations of this paper. The data collection process was marked by cultural influences. A wide range of responses from mothers were predictable and socially accepted for example the question on the use of corporal punishment revealed negative responses mainly from mothers. In addition more women said they did not discuss the viewing of inappropriate content with their children. This would suggest that the questionnaires were filled in the presence of their spouses hence the reflection of conformity to that society's norms. Saudi Arabia is a collectivist society (Triandis, 2002). Unlike in individualist societies (ibid.), the values of the group in such societies take precedence over the opinions and practices of the individual. For example if a female spouse is behaving in a way deemed to be deviant by society they are strictly forbidden to express that verbally or otherwise. On the other hand, personal freedoms is one of rights enjoyed by individuals of industrial societies (Triandis, 2002), regardless of gender, age, sexual orientation or religious affiliation.

The study acknowledges that application of models is limited in studies about the young people and use of the internet. On the contrary, the theory of Social Cognitive (Bandura, 1986) has been widely used to explain the compulsivity of young people's consumption of internet content

especially Social Networking Sites (SNS) like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. This model has been widely used in research involving college students. This framework analyses "...the relationship between gratifications and media exposure" (Kaye, 1998:27). Although Saudi children may not be defined as digital natives (Prensky, 2001), they are certainly more technologically savvy than their immigrant parents (Prensky, 2001).

The overall purpose of this paper was to investigate parental level of control of the children's internet use. The paper sought to fill the gap of previous and current literature which has heavily concentrated on the dangers of surfing the internet, without giving due consideration to what this paper considers pertinent. Future research should concentrate on the development of a more open relationship with parents where children feel they can approach their parents if they do not understand anything about the internet or if they have received inappropriate contact or material. Likewise, the government needs to invest in child protection organisations like the NSPCC (National Society of the Prevention of Child Cruelty) which fights for the rights of children and encourages children and adults to report any form of abuse, intimidation and bullying.

5. Conclusion

This study has presented the findings which suggest that demographic parental variables seem to have no effect on the level of control of their children's surfing habits. It has also illustrated the need for parents to be more approachable so their children can feel free to share their internet surfing experiences. A shift in attitude and society's conservative nature is paramount in ensuring that children make informed decisions about choices on internet use. A recommendation has been made for awareness and education programmes targeting at parents, especially mothers in dealing with children's World Wide Web habits. Thus, the government should draw a clear strategy to this effect.

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