The effect of playing online games on family communication pattern

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Abstract Current technological developments give games have quality and facilities that are not inferior to other media. One of them is that game players can interact with each other online so that the game is not only used for entertainment but also verbal and non-verbal interactions. Game users today are not only children but also parents who play online games. In fact, online games are also often played between parents or husband and wife. On the other hand, the increase in online gaming activity for the husband who acts as the head of the family can create problems with family communication patterns. This is because the husband has a powerful role in family members. Therefore, these conditions can affect the harmony of the family. This study aims to determine the relationship between playing online games and family communication patterns in terms of intensity, frequency, and motives in married adult men. The data were collected using a questionnaire distributed online to 100 respondents throughout Indonesia. The data obtained were then analysed using the SPSS program. The results showed that playing online games did not affect family communication patterns. Game players have different reasons according to the intensity, frequency, and motive of playing the game so that it does not have a negative effect on family communication patterns. Thus, it can be concluded that online games can positively impact family communication patterns if appropriately implemented.

Keywords: online games; intensity; frequency; motive; family communication patterns

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INTRODUCTION

The development of technology and communication marks the digital revolution by creating various types of communication media (Pamuji, 2020; Susilo & Sugihartati, 2019). According to Branchi et al. (2015), this progress and development make it easier for humans to conduct their lives. One of the technological developments is the emergence of the internet. The development of communication and information technology can provide insights to the public regarding developing the latest media knowledge. The public also tends to be more responsive to new media and technology (Carlson dan Issacs, 2018). As time goes by, it is assumed that the digital generation's life depends on technological developments, which causes them to be inseparable from gadgets (de la Cruz Paragas dan Lin, 2016). According to dos Reis (2018), gadgets should make the digital generation smarter than the previous generation because they can provide much information (Pradhipta, 2021).

Technological advances have created various creative and challenging games, such as online games, that are increasingly in demand by many users for various reasons and purposes. Currently, online games have blossomed all over the world, including Indonesia. Indeed, Indonesia is one of the largest online game markets in the Asia Pacific (Kharisma, 2019). Today it is very easy to access online games because game developers distribute these games for free. This situation can cause users to become addicted to playing with other people as if they are not in cyberspace (Pradhipta, 2021). With the increasing number of online game users, many online game centres have emerged, one of which is the increasingly widespread internet cafes (internet cafes). Today, online gaming is not limited to internet cafes; everyone can do it on their smartphones (Sami et al., 2018). Consequently, users spend more time on their smartphones and sometimes do not even care about their surroundings. The online game phenomenon affects all people regardless of their sexes and ages. Online game users are dominated by children, adults, and even parents (Aarsand, 2007).

Based on that background issue, playing online game is presumed to negatively or positively impact its users. Some of the negative impacts, such as excessive use of online games, can lead to problems and even divide family members. Research from Seok and Dacosta Seok dan Dacosta (2014) states that online gaming can negatively impact one's life and may even cause death if not adequately supervised. Putnam (2000) in Kraut et al. (1998) stated that internet networks could encourage someone to spend time alone outside the social environment such as family and friends. It then becomes a paradox: using the internet can reduce direct interaction or discussion among people. Research from Oduor et al. (2016) in the North American region found that excessive smartphone use in family members can lead to conflicts in family communication patterns. The emergence of family conflict is

indicated by anxiety about the problems experienced by husbands, wives, and children or vice versa.

Wives complain about husbands spending too much time on online games, which cause the loss of *quality time* with the family (Cañas et al., 2020; Ferguson & Colwell, 2020). Today it is often found that husbands who like online games may have an addiction (Zendle et al., 2020). Although it may not be a big problem initially, it may cause issues in the family later. For example, when families go shopping at the mall, husbands are more likely to sit alone, enjoying online games, than accompanying their wives and families. Another example is when family members gather, husbands are often more occupied with playing online games, which may cause reduced *quality time* with family. Another impact that can be caused is that online games via smartphones must have access to internet data packages that may cost a significant amount of money. The higher the intensity of using online games, the faster the quota is used, the higher the incurred costs will be, which can lead to family problems as finance is often a source of family problems. This condition can eventually lead to disharmony in the relationship between a husband and a wife.

Online gaming can also cause frustration and negative emotional tendencies for users. Teng et al. (2014) stated that playing games containing elements of war (fighting), especially violence, can affect aggressiveness in the short and long term, affecting the user's cognitive and emotional level. In addition, there are also elements of negative interactions because 76.32% of users experience harassment by opposing players. Fox et al. (2018) found that inexperienced online gamer may experience an inability to control emotions when playing online games.

The use of media does not always have a negative effect. Several studies have found positive results related to media use on family communication patterns (Cañas et al., 2020; Cote et al., 2021). The difference in family communication frequency between husband and wife and children can affect family communication patterns. It is said that the media can also be used to promote closeness in family communication (Rudi, 2015). Wei and Lo (2006) and Chang and Po Chien (2015) also explained that communication media could affect family communication. Padilla-Walker et al. (2012) also stated that the media could influence family interactions to create quality relationships with families.

Furthermore, Costa dan Veloso (2016) found positive results on games in the family environment as online game users can increase social interaction in the family environment. According to Wang (2018), playing online games together within a family can create a close relationship, interaction, and communication. Osmanovic and Pecchioni (2016) revealed that parents enjoy playing games with other family members. Indirectly, playing games can even lead to interaction and comfort in a family environment. On the other hand, other aspects of online games have also been researched by Bulduklu (2017). He argued

that according to users, online games are not just a game but have a specific motive or purpose, which can cause users to become active and dependent on these online games. In detail, according to users, it can be said that playing online games can provide benefits, including (1) satisfaction (playing games stimulates emotions), (2) challenges or competition (playing games allows someone to reach a level of achievement), (3) Social interaction (playing games allow a person to create an atmosphere of communication), (4) addiction (playing games allows someone to do things that are not possible in real life so that it creates addiction), and (5) escape (playing games help to avoid stress or relieve stress or fatigue). Thus, it can be said that playing games are influenced by user motives and the frequency or intensity of playing online games.

METHODOLOGY

This research used a quantitative approach and explanative research. Saukko (2011) states that explanative research is carried out using research instruments in questionnaires as a tool for observation and data collection. Variable relationships were found based on data from the samples (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Furthermore, according to Kriyantono (2006), this type of explanatory research aimed to determine phenomena and their correlation, which means that the researcher related it to other variables. Explanative research was used as data collection to examine the variables of frequency, intensity, and motive with variables of family communication patterns to husbands.

The population is an area of generalisation of subjects and objects with certain qualities and characteristics to understand and draw conclusions. The sample is part of the number and characteristics of the population (Zyphur & Pierides, 2017). This study's sampling technique was a nonprobability sampling technique, which is a technique that does not provide equal opportunities for every population member. This type of sample was *accidental sampling* or choosing the research sample. In this study, an online search for respondents was conducted by chance. Online searches were carried out by giving questionnaires to respondents in a Google Form containing questions and structured statements via social media networks or email.

The samples in this study were adult married men. There were as many as 100 people gathered for this research. Table 1 presents the respondents' ages, while table 2 reveals the devices used for online gaming. The answers were presented on a Likert scale with five answer categories: Strongly Agree, Agree, Unsure, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Each answer is scored in the following manner: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Unsure (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).

Table 1. Age Group of Respondents

Age Group (Years)	Total (%)
20 - 30	55.0
31 - 40	32.0
41 - 50	8.0
51 - 60	4.0
61 - 70	1.0

Source: Research data (2020)

Table 2. Types of devices used by respondents to play online game

Type of equipment used by Respondents	Total (%)
Mobile	85.0
Computer	9.0
Game Console	3.0
Other equipment	3.0

Source: Research data (2020)

The variables used in this study consisted of three factors, namely: intensity, frequency, and motives for playing online games. According to Ardianto and Erdinaya (2004), the level of media use can be seen and measured from audiences' frequency and duration when using the media. In other words, the amount of time or intensity that the users spend to use the media to meet their needs.

Audiences use certain media because it starts from the desire or reason the user uses the media. That is, there are certain motives from users to use the media. Media selection has an essential role for users, including meeting their needs and satisfaction (Nasrullah, 2019). Furthermore, Bulduklu (2017) states that according to users, online games are not just games but have a specific motive or purpose. This situation can cause users to become active and dependent on the online game. Based on these variables, it will be possible to determine the correlation between family communication patterns. The collected data were then analysed using SPSS version 26 software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Online games can influence family communication patterns, determined by the user's frequency, intensity, and motives in playing the game.

The influence of playing online games frequency on family communication patterns

Based on the questionnaire results, it was found that users' duration of playing online games ranges from 1 hour to more than 4 hours (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The duration of time to use the respondent's online game
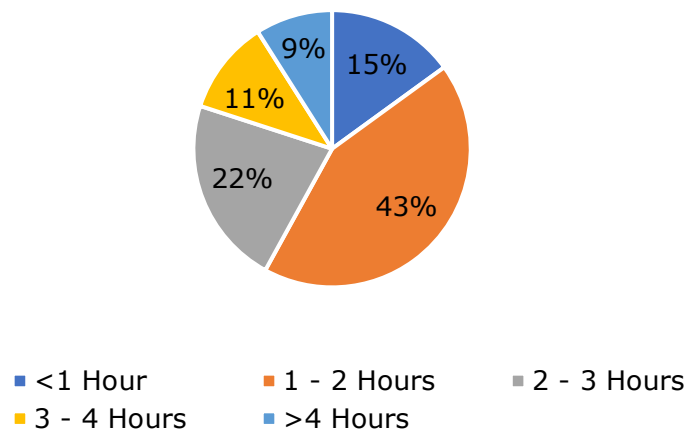
Source: Research data (2020)

Figure 1 reveals that most respondents play online games for 1 - 2 hours. Based on the analysis results, we found no correlation between playing games with family communication patterns. It means that the high frequency of playing games does not have a negative effect on family communication patterns. Several studies support this finding that the duration of playing games is associated with family communication patterns. Skalski et al. (2012) argue that playing games' average duration is 1-2 hours. These research results are also supported by data obtained by POKKT dan Decision Lab (2018), which found that 833 respondents on average play online games on their cell phones for 1 hour daily. The respondents stated that they only play online games for a short time. They also want to interact with other people (playing together). Games are not a top priority, even though the respondents play online games every day. This finding shows that the frequency of playing online games does not carry negative impacts.

On the other hand, it is possible that playing games may positively influence the family's communication patterns. This effect may be influenced by the surrounding environment, conditions, and different cultural characteristics. Osmanovic dan Pecchioni (2016 also state that games can have a good effect for the family. They state that games could create a positive atmosphere in the family environment, creating intense interactions. Furthermore, they argue that playing games do not have a negative impact.

On the other hand, it may have positive influences. Even so, they do not rule out that playing online games for 3 - 5 hours may cause addiction to playing. They think that such a period may cause problems, namely behaviour change due to playing games (Seok dan Dacosta, 2014).

Effect of intensity of playing online games on family communication patterns

Based on the data in Figure 2, we found that most respondents play online games in their spare time (A). Lorentz (2015) also supports this result. He states that playing games may take some time. Playing online games requires much time, and the players must take some time to complete the missions in the game. Besides, Limelight (2019) states that 64.8% of users do not play online games while working. Therefore, online game players believe that playing in their spare time is better than playing while doing other activities. Costa and Veloso (2016) also mention that games also have a positive effect on the family. By playing games, they can interact with their family members without causing conflict.

**Figure 2.** Intensity Distribution in the Intensity Variable of Playing Online Games
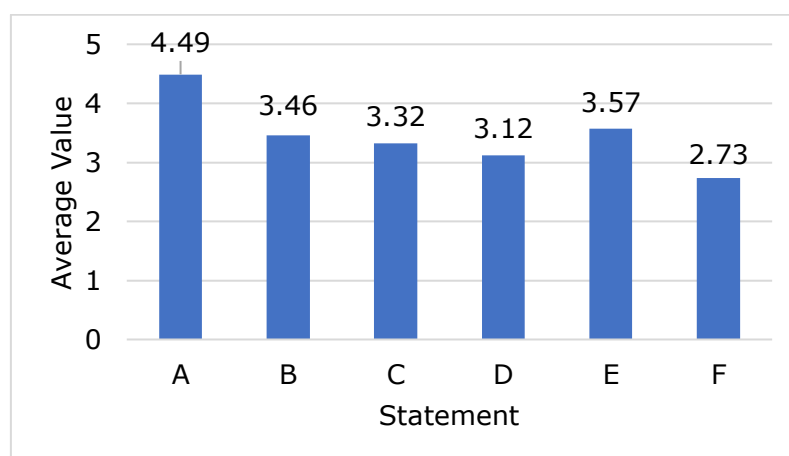
Source: Research data (2020)

Most respondents said that online gaming is a hobby (B). With an average score of 3.57, the respondents 'agree' that online gaming is just a hobby for their husbands. This result is supported by other research; Eklund and Jonsson (2012) argue that respondents state that games are a form of recreation and a hobby. Thus, games should not be viewed as unfavourable because games do not interfere with social life. The lowest statement was shown by respondents who stated that they play online games because they follow a community (F).

The influence of the motives for playing online games on family communication patterns

The motives for playing online games from respondents can be observed in affective, personal integration, social and cognitive integration (Figure 3). On the cognitive side, respondents agreed that they play to seek knowledge (A). From the affective side, respondents stated they play games to gain experience and victory. Bulduklu (2017) opines that the need to play online games is aimed at winning. The goal of playing online games is to get satisfying results, not just playing games. Additionally, the motive of playing online games is not only to gain the victory but also to gain experience. The motive for gaining experience is also supported by Osmanovic and Pecchioni (2016) research, which states that they are not "*gamers*" and are not dependent on using online games. They always play games every week because they merely want to try and are interested in playing these games.

Figure 3. The distribution of intensity in the motive variables for playing online games
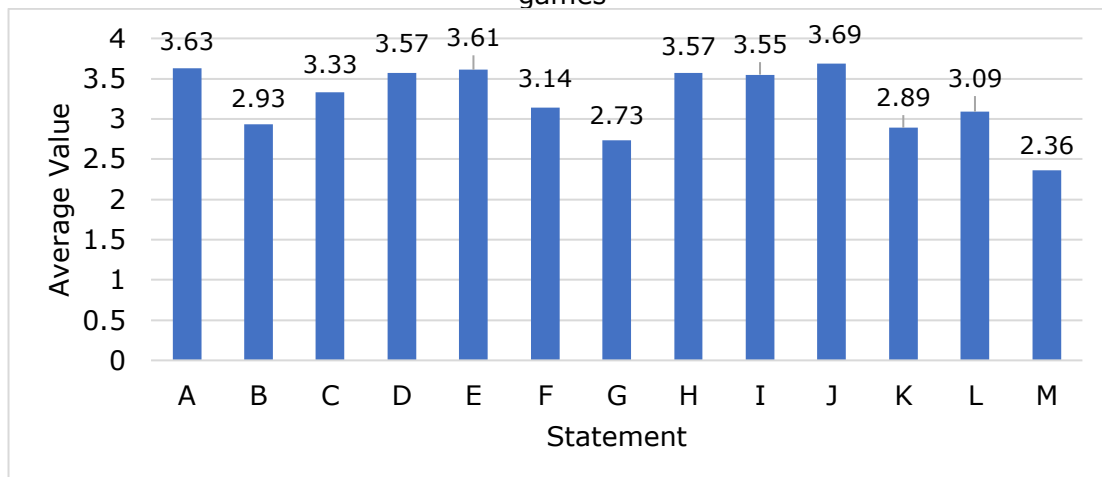
Source: Research data (2020)

Playing games is also used by respondents to improve their skills from a personal integration perspective. Redmon (2010) states that playing online games is aimed at social interaction and positively impacts improving skills. This result confirms Redmon's statement that playing online games train and improve players' skills in the hands, eyes, and cognition. An example is an online battle royale type game, namely "Player Unknown's Battlegrounds" (PUBG). Cindy (2020) states that the PUBG online game requires skills in fighting with opponent players. In terms of social integration, she opines that respondents play games because they wanted to play with opponents. Sariyanto dan Sari (2019) state that games are part of the players' daily interactions. This interaction is communication with opponent players. Players rarely communicate with the gamer's community directly, but they communicate through online games via voice. Cole and Griffths (2007) in Huang et al. (2015) stated that social interaction through online

games is part of an important element that makes playing online games enjoyable.

Communication Patterns

In establishing family relationships, there are different characters in each scope of family relationships. Morissan (2010) states that everyone has specific characteristics, namely (1) closeness to maintain privacy in their life and (2) openness, conveying their life to others. This open and closed nature has challenges that can arise in every sphere of family relationship. Therefore, a good family communication pattern is needed to overcome differences of opinion in the family. That way, family communication patterns can be maintained so as not to cause conflict. Murdock (1995) in Ali (2017) states that communication is the most important thing in the family. All family members must support communication to feel a close and needy bond with each family member.

There are two types of orientation in family communication: conversation orientation and conformity orientation, which act as the central beliefs that determine how families communicate (Fitzpatrick and Ritchie, 1990 in Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 2002). The conversation orientation shows that a husband who likes to play shows quite good communication with his family (Figure 4). This can be seen from the respondent's statement, which shows a high number of communication patterns. Husband (respondents) always respect family opinion (A), asks family opinion (B), confides in problems (C), is open (D), shares experiences (E) and has discussions with family (F).

The uses and gratification theory explains that media use plays an active role in the communication process. Media users try to find the best media sources to meet their needs Nurudin, 2011).

Figure 4. Communication patterns of conversational orientation

Average Value
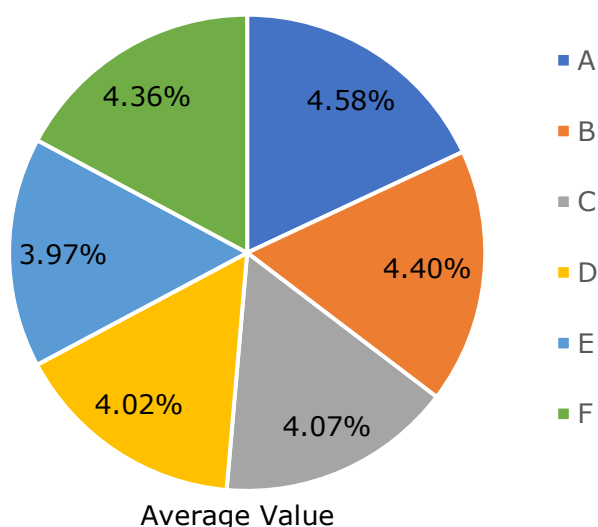
Source: Research data (2020)

Braithwaite et al. (2017) state that media or games can be correlated with the study of family communication patterns. It is stated that the use of media is not just an individual factor. Indeed, other factors influence it, one of which is that playing online games is related to family communication patterns. Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) explain a dimension to family communication patterns consisting of conversation orientation. Conversational orientation is defined as a family that creates a communication atmosphere with encouragement and participation from all family members. Based on that theory and facts, it can be said that the higher the online playing game, the better the family communication pattern.

Furthermore, Qin (2008) shows that the motive for the need to use media is very much needed. It is expected that when using the media, users get *feedback* in the form of satisfaction and affection after using the media. Valenzuela et al. (2019) also stated that using media on *cognitive needs* can lead to interaction in the family. This study revealed that online game users are accustomed to using the media to get knowledge and information on the latest news. This has led to a high orientation of family communication patterns because family members will discuss and discuss using the media to create interactions within the family. Osmanovic dan Pecchioni (2016) state that playing games between young and old generations in the family can foster social interaction.

Moreover, online games promote interaction among parents and their children. They always play together because they want to maintain a relationship in the family. Redmon (2010) also states that players play games not alone but usually with family members. So, it can be interpreted that the conversation orientation is very high. Playing online games can also be said to be entertainment in old age. Playing online games together between parents and children or grandparents and grandchildren can provide entertainment for parents, as well as a way of communicating with children and grandchildren (Osmanovic dan Pecchioni, 2016)

CONCLUSION

Playing online games does not always have a negative effect on users and their families. There are other factors such as intensity, frequency, and motive. A husband may be positively influenced by online games, which affects family communication patterns based. This statement is based on adapted theories, namely needs motives and family communication patterns.

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