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INTERNET USAGE BEHAVIORS AMONG YOUNG TEENAGERS

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Abstract: *This study identifies the Malaysian suburban young teenagers' behavior on internet usage: types of information, online activities, and internet topic of interest. This study also investigates the relationship between gender and internet usage behavior. A set of 350 questionnaires have been distributed to a group of young teenagers' age 11-12 years old in Year Six of primary schools in suburbs of Selangor. A total of 297 completed responses have been received and analyzed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS. The findings indicate that although young teenagers at suburban prefer to search entertainment information, do leisure activities and are interested in non-serious topic, most of the time, they still search information, do online activities and interested on educational information at other time. Further research can be conducted on information content preferences of young teenagers in other parts of Malaysia.*

Keywords: *Young teenagers, Internet usage, Malaysia, online information, internet usage behavior.*

INTRODUCTION

Several surveys have been conducted to discover the internet usage around the world. One such study was done by International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in 2011 which found that one of the 7 billion world's population is online users and 45% of the internet users are below 25 years old. (International Telecommunication Union (ITU), 2011). Internet World Stats as of December 31, 2011 indicated in its website that Malaysia is one of the Asia top

internet countries with 17.7 million users, out of which 12 millions used Facebook (Internet World Stats, 2012). The use of Internet among children and teenagers has been a matter of concern among parents, educators and citizens of the world. There have been studies to discover the activities of children and teenagers on the Internet on which web sites they are visited and what contents are read by them (Livingstone, S. and Bober, M., 2003). The frequency and duration of time spent on the internet are also investigated to identify both the negative and positive impact of the internet to children and teenagers. The development of Child Net and NSteens online is an example of the initiatives to provide exclusive online information to guide and support young people, to enable them to make educated life choices, participate in society and achieve their ambitions. (www.nsteens.org, www.childnet-int. org, www.netsmartz.org, www.safeteens.com). Several studies done in the United States of America (USA) and United Kingdom (UK have also pointed out the advantages and disadvantages of Internet use, and concerned citizens have initiated actions to safeguard children and young teenagers from the perils of the Internet. In Malaysia, the concern on teenagers' use of the Internet has been seen in mass media from time to time (Ken, L.P., 2012). However, there has been no attempt to investigate the details of young teenagers' activities at the age of 11-12 years old on the web, although there are data that indicate the rising use of internet in Malaysia as compared to other countries (Household Use of the Internet Survey, 2012). These young teenagers are known to be active users of the Internet. The types of information, online activities and topic of interest of the young teenagers on the Internet are investigated with goal of instilling awareness of the implication of internet usage. The objectives of this study are to identify the young teenagers' internet usage behavior and the types of information preference, the activities which they like to undertake through the internet and their topic of interest. This study also investigates the relationship between gender and the young teenagers' internet usage behavior.

LITERATUE REVIEW

There is no shortage of literature on the impact of the Internet on its users and society in different parts of the world. Currently, much attention has been given to the Internet's impact on children and young adults, as a result of several studies indicating that children are among the biggest users of the Internet worldwide. The state-of the-art ongoing project entitled, 'EURO's Kids Online II (http://www2.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKids Online/EUKidsII%20(2009-11)/home.asp) initiated by researchers of European member countries is one good example of the serious attention given to the new challenges faced by children, parents and educators who frequently use the Internet. The project's main aim is to identify the patterns of Internet use among children and parents that can lead to the formulation of policies and preventive actions from risks and at the same time promoting safety use. The Safer Internet Programme is another initiative by the European Commission to bring together various stakeholders who can contribute to make the Internet safer for children. In the UK, a survey, conducted by online charity YouthNet (Elena di Antonio, 2011), noted that four out of five youths took to the web for guidance. One third noted that they preferred to go online with their issues because of the simplicity of online resources. 76% of the research group thinks the Internet remains a safe haven "as long as you know what you're doing." Instant messaging on the computer has become the phone for kids today. Children spend hours chatting online with their friends, and sometimes with strangers. A recent study found that one in five children online is approached by a sexual predator who may try to set up a face-to-face meeting that may lead to undesirable activities which are unknown to the children (National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), 2002).

In Malaysia, a few studies were conducted among the young adults and the workers. According to Nielsen Mobile Insight Malaysia 2010 survey (Marketing Magazine, April 14, 2011), internet usage in Malaysia increased to 41% in 2010 from 25% in 2009. The findings from the survey also indicate that the highest internet usage was among the youth aged between 20 and 24, and spent an average of 22.3 hours online per week. The survey was conducted between October and December to 2010, and the age of the respondent between 15-64 years old. A survey of internet usage in the Malaysian construction Industry was conducted by a Group of Universiti Sains Malaysia (Mui, L.Y. et. al., 2002) between November 2000 and January 2001, with objectives to obtain the current levels of internet usage in the construction industry in Malaysia and the benefits and disadvantages experienced by the users. The survey found that the respondents have the accessibility to the internet and the main use is only for email and information search. A research has been conducted in 2008 to examine the relationship between learning organization and internet usage by Malaysian IT employees (Eynon, R., & Malmberg, L., 2011). The results reveal that culture, structure and process and people characteristics have significant relationships with both purposes of internet usage and types of internet tools. The study on the impact of the Internet on Malaysian society has been initiated by the Malaysian Commission of Multimedia Commission (MCMC) in collaboration with Universities under the Research Collaboration on New Media Content (Lenhart, A., Purcell, K., Smith, A. & Zickuhr, K., 2010). One of the main objectives of the programme is to build research capacity and knowledge resources in media policy and regulation. It is envisaged that the research collaboration will provide insights and new perspectives into the social impact of networked media content. Research topics including "Young People and New Media - Social Uses, Social Shaping & Social Consequences" by Universiti Sains Malaysia, "Social Impacts of blogging on young adults: how it shapes individual opinions" by Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman and "Self-regulatory framework and mechanism in the Malaysian Media Environment" by Universiti Putra Malaysia. In addition, under the Spectrum Research Collaboration Program (SRCP), two research have been completed entitled "Adoption, Appropriation and Impact of Wireless Technologies on Malaysian Society" by Universiti Teknologi Malaysia and"The Impact of Wireless Technology among Malaysian Society" by Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. The Malaysia Cybersecurity also has published many articles on the internet usage by the children (Redy Jeffry Mohamad Ramli, 2007). However, the above studies have not paid specific attention to Malaysian young teenagers especially those staying at suburbs area, even though research in developed countries have found the frequent activities to be computer games and social network, sometimes with strangers. The internet, and other new communications media are often seen to pose threats and dangers to the children and young teenagers, but they also provide new opportunities for creativity and self-determination.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on Malaysian young teenagers aged between 11 - 12 years old, currently in Year Six at primary schools in suburbs area in Selangor. This group of respondents are selected because they are in the formative years of turning from children to teenagers, and contribute to future national development, provided proper guidance is given to them in a positive manner. The suburbs area is selected as there are very few studies focusing on this suburb compared to the rural and urban areas. The respondents are randomly selected from 3 national schools *(Sekolah Kebangsaan)* at Selangor, Malaysia suburbs area.

A set of questionnaire was designed to gather data to answer the research questions and achieve the study's objectives. The first part of the questionnaire is on respondent profiles:

gender and the internet frequency usage. For the internet frequency usage, the respondents have to select either everyday, two (2) or three (3) times a week, once a week, or never use. The second part is the types of information searched on the internet: pictures, games, friends, songs, educational notes, software, and exam questions. For the types of information searching frequency, the respondents have to select either everyday, two (2) or three (3) times a week, once a week, or never use. The third part is on internet activities: reading blogs, reading news, interactive learning, doing school homework, listening to the music, downloading songs, downloading software, emailing, social networking, playing online game, and doing online business. For the internet activities frequency, the respondents have to select either everyday, two (2) or three (3) times a week, once a week, or never use. The last part is on topic of interest while using internet: cartoon, thriller, sports, humor, entertainment, science, religion, travel, decoration, cars, computer, animals, romance, maps, aerospace, education, fashion, recipe, investigation, war, aeroplane, flower/plants, health, sex, food & beverages, law, biography, sawing, sales & promotion, medicine, and blog. For the internet's topic of interest searching frequency, the respondents have to select the topic which they are interested in only.

The approval and cooperation from the schools' authorities have been given to collect data from their students as they have been selected as young teenagers' respondents under the above-mentioned. A set of 350 questionnaires have been distributed to the young teenagers and, a total of 297 completed responses have been received and analyzed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS on descriptive statistics among variables.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The finding of this study give the empirical data of young teenagers' internet usage behavior in suburbs areas on types of information which they like to search on the internet, the activities which they like to do on the internet, the topic of interest while using the internet and, the relationship between gender and the young teenagers' internet usage behavior.

Demographic Information

Table 1 illustrates the demographic information about this study. It shows that 150 (51%) respondents are males and the remaining 147 (49%) are females. The schools selected in this survey are national school (sekolah kebangsaan), where most of the respondents are Malays (more than 90%). The term of language use at home indicates majority use Malay Language (Bahasa Malaysia) while 1% use either Chinese, Tamil, English or other languages respectively. In terms of internet usage, majority of the respondents use Internet two to three times (106 or 36%) or once a week (101 or 34%), and 35 (12%) respondents never use Internet at all.

		Frequency	%
Gender	Female	147	49
	Male	150	51
Language Usu at Home	Bahasa Malaysia	289	97
	Chinese	1	0
	Tamil	2	1
	English	2	1
	Others	3	1
Internet Usage	Never	35	12
	Every Day	47	16
	Two to Three Times Per Week	106	36
	Once a Week	101	34
	Others	8	2

Table 1: Demographic Information

Types of information search preferred by young teenagers

There are seven (7) types of information search on the internet in this section: pictures, games, friends, songs, education notes, software, and exam questions. The respondents had to select which type of information they like to search while using internet either every day, two (2) or three (3) times a week, once a week, or never use. The findings in Table 2 shows that songs (71), games (63) and friends (59) are the to 64 88 71 Songs 65 59 34 NotesEducation 74 59 24 QuestionsExam 88 79 63 Games 90 53 20 Pictures weekOnce a a weekTwo or three times Everyday Information Types of three types of information which the respondents preferred to search everyday using internet. Songs (88), games (79) and, educational notes (59) and exam questions (59) are the information which they like to search two or three times a week. Pictures (90), games (88) and exam questions (74) are the information which they preferred to search once a week. The findings also show that the least preferred type of information search is software.

Types of Information	Everyday	Two or three times a week	Once a week
Pictures	20	53	90
Games	63	79	88
Exam Questions	24	59	74
Education Notes	34	59	65
Songs	71	88	64
Friends	59	50	63
Software	8	28	33

Table 2: Types of Information search preferred by young teenagers

Types of information search and young teenagers' gender

The findings in Table 3 show that the top three types of information which the male respondents like to search everyday are games (28%), friends (27%) and songs (23%). Meanwhile games (28%), songs (28%) and educational notes (23%) are the information which they like to search two or three times a week. Pictures (34%), games (32%) and songs (26%) are the information which they preferred to search once a week. On the other hand, the top three types of information which the female respondents like to search everyday are songs (24%), games (14%) and, both friends (13%) and educational notes (13%). Meanwhile, songs (31%), games (25%) and, picture (18%), friends (18%) and exam questions (18%) are the information which they like to search two or three times a week. Pictures (34%), games (32%) and songs (26%) are the information which they preferred to search once a week. The findings also show that the least preferred type of information by both male and female respondents is software.

Types of information search	Everyday (%)		Two or three times a week (%)		Once a week (%)	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
Songs	24	23	31	28	18	26
Games	14	28	25	28	28	32
Friends	13	27	18	16	23	20
Pictures	8	5	18	18	27	34
Exam Questions	7	9	18	22	31	19
Educational Notes	13	10	17	23	22	22
Software	3	3	8	11	9	13

Table 3: Types of information search and young teenagers' gender

Types of internet activities preferred by young teenagers

There are eleven (11) types of internet activities in this section: reading blogs, reading news/ books, interactive learning, doing school homework, listening to the music, downloading songs, download software, emailing, social networking, playing online games, and doing online business. The respondents have to select which internet activities they like to do while using internet either every day, two (2) or three (3) times a week, once a week, or never use. The findings in Table 4 shows that listening to the music (72%), doing school homework (65%) and playing online games (63%) are the top three online activities which the respondents like to do on internet every day. They also like to do school homework (82%), listen to the music (70%) and active in social networking (70%) two or three times a week. Reading news/books (67%), listen to the music (66%) and, interactive learning (62%) and playing online games (62%) are the internet activities which the respondents preferred to do once a week. The findings also show that the least preferred internet activities are online business.

Types of internet activities	Everyday (%)	Two or three times a week (%)	Once a week (%)
Listen to the music	72 7	0	66
Doing school homework	65 8	2	57
Playing online games	63 5	1	62
Social networking	51 7	0	58
Reading news/books	45 5	0	67
Download songs	43 5	0	49
Interactive learning	42 4	8	62
Email	39 5	5	53
Reading blogs	26 4	7	55
Download software	21 2	7	55
Online business	11 2	1	26

Table 4: Types of internet activities preferred by young teenagers

Types of internet activities and young teenagers' gender

The findings in Table 5 show that the top three types of internet activities which the male respondents like to do everyday are playing online games (28%), doing school homework (25%) and social networking (23%). Meanwhile, doing school homework (30%), listening to the music (26%) and social networking (26%) are the top three activities they like to do on the internet two or three times a week. Reading news/books (23%), interactive learning (23%), and listening to the music (23%) are the main activities which they preferred to do on internet once a week. On the other hand, the top three activities which the female respondents like to do on the internet everyday are listening to the music (27%), doing school homework (19%) and reading news/books (16%). Meanwhile, doing school homework (25%), listening to the music (22%) and social networking (21%) are the top three activities they like to do on the internet two or three times a week. Playing online games (29%), social networking (23%) and, reading news/book (22%), doing school homework (22%) and listening to the music (22%) are the main activities which they preferred to do on internet once a week. The findings also show that the least preferred internet activity by both male and female respondents is doing online business.

Types of internet activities	Everyday (%)		Two or three times a week (%)		Once a week (%)	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
Listen to the music	27	22	22	26	22	23
Doing school homework	19	25	25	30	22	17
Reading news/books	16	14	17	17	22	23
Playing online games	15	28	16	19	29	13
Download songs	13	16	15	19	18	15
Interactive learning	12	16	14	19	19	23
Social networking	12	23	21	26	23	17
Email	10	16	18	19	18	17
Reading blogs	8	10	16	16	21	16
Download software	5	9	8	11	15	22
Online business	3	4	8	7	9	9

*F- Female, M-Male

Table 5: Types of internet activities and young teenagers' gender

Topic of interest while using internet

There are thirty one (31) topics of interest while using the internet in this section: cartoon, thriller, sports, humor, entertainment, science, religion, travel, decoration, cars, computer, animals, romance, maps, aerospace, education, fashion, recipe, investigation, war, aeroplane, flower/plants, health, sex, food & beverages, law, biography, sawing, sales & promotion, medicine, and blog. The respondents were asked to select which topic do they like to search while using the internet. The findings in Table 6 show that the top three topics of interest by the respondents are cartoon (48%), thriller (43%) and sports (41%). The last three are blogs (8%), medicine (9%) and, sharing the same percentage (10%) sales & promotion, sawing and biography.

Topic if Inter est while using internet	Female	Female (%)	Male	Male (%)	Total	Total (%)
Cartoon	53	36	90	60	143	48
Thriller	68	46	61	41	129	43
Sports	43	29	78	52	121	41
Humor	56	38	59	39	115	39
Entertainment	55	37	43	29	98	33
Science	41	28	56	37	97	33
Relig ion	51	35	45	30	96	32
Travel	43	29	47	31	90	30
Decoration	40	27	38	25	78	26
Cars	26	18	52	35	78	26
Computer	33	22	44	29	77	26
Animals	29	20	47	31	76	26
Romance	30	20	37	25	67	23
Maps	23	16	44	29	67	23
Education	38	26	28	19	66	22
Aerospace	27	18	39	26	66	22
Fashion	38	26	26	17	64	22
Recipe	41	28	18	12	59	20
Investigation	18	12	40	27	58	20
War	11	7	47	31	58	20
Aeroplane	15	10	38	25	53	18
Flower / Plants	25	17	25	17	50	17
Health	21	14	26	17	47	16
Sex	9	6	28	19	37	12
Food & Beverages	14	10	19	13	33	11
Law	13	9	19	13	32	11
Biography	17	12	13	9	30	10
Sawing	17	12	13	9	30	10
Sales & Promotion	5	3	24	16	29	10
Medicine	17	12	11	7	28	9
Blog	14	10	10	7	24	8

Table 6: Topic of interest while using internet and young teenagers' gender

Topic of interest while using the internet and young teenagers' gender

The findings show that the female respondents are most interested to find information on topics thriller (46%), humor (38%) and entertainment (37%), and least interested on sales and promotion (3%), sex (6%) and war (7%). However, the male respondents are interested to find topics on cartoon (60%), sports (52%) and thriller (41%), and least interested on blogs (7%), medicine (7%), sawing (9%) and biography (9%).

CONCLUSION

This study indicates that the young teenagers at suburban area preferred to search entertainment information (games, songs and friends) on the internet most of the time, rather than academic information (educational notes and exam questions). However, for the activities on the internet, they have mixed preference on entertainment, social and academic (music, school homework, games and social network). This study also indicates that although they do not prefer to search academic information using the internet, they still prefer to use internet to do their school homework and do interactive learning activities. This study also indicates that the young teenagers are interested to find leisure topics (cartoon, thriller, and sports) rather than education or serious topics.

There is no significant difference between the male and female young teenagers internet usage behavior. Both genders most prefer to search songs and games information on internet, and also pictures and friends. However, the findings also indicate that the female young teenagers prefer to search educational notes and exam questions, compared than the male who prefer to search educational notes information only. Although the male young teenagers most prefer to play online games, and the female most prefer to listening the music, for education, both of them still prefer to do school homework activities on the internet. The finding of this study shows that although the young teenagers at suburban prefer to search entertainment information, do leisure activities and have interest on non-serious topics, they still prefer on educational information, activities and topic on the internet. It is good sign to the parents, educators, government and related agencies. With a proper guidance, the young teenagers can be guided to use the internet effectively and efficiently. However, the findings cannot be generalized. Further research can be conducted to respondents at other suburbs, urban and rural areas in the whole country.

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