

YouTube and Kids: Maternal Influence on Children's Learning Experiences

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Received Date: 8 May 2024

Accepted Date: 13 June 2024

Revised Date: 26 June 2024

Published Date: 31 July 2024

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ABSTRACT

Children in this digital era can learn from numerous content available on YouTube. This study delves into the influence of maternal guidance on children's learning experiences through YouTube. By referencing Feuerstein's Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) theory, the study seeks to uncover the various approaches mothers employ to navigate YouTube's content, enhancing children's learning experiences. Through qualitative research methods, specifically interviews, this investigation also aims to determine the types of knowledge children aged three to nine acquire from YouTube videos. The findings illustrate the mothers' active participation in children's learning - asking questions, discussing the content, singing along, providing explanations, and connecting to real life - has prepared the children to improve their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development. The results provide important insights into the essential role of maternal involvement in shaping children's knowledge acquisition on YouTube, with valuable implications for parents, educators, and instructional content developers.

Keywords: *children, education, mediated learning experience, parenting, YouTube*

INTRODUCTION

Due to greater technological accessibility today, younger generations with shorter attention spans prefer watching YouTube videos over reading bedtime stories (Abdullah, 2023). YouTube serves as a practical and straightforward social networking platform for children, accessible from a young age, particularly considering the increased internet accessibility (Pertiwi et al., 2022). Certain videos feature child presenters, leading to a form of peer-to-peer modelling and information sharing. This can be especially interesting to young viewers since it allows them to connect with the presenter actively, encouraging them to learn new skills and knowledge (Neumann & Herodotou, 2020). Since many channels on YouTube are designed to target children, the interaction between kids and online content is rapidly evolving (Alqahtani & Syed, 2023). Mobile technologies are increasingly being integrated into schools,

preschools, and childcare centres, enhancing children's interaction and learning experiences. This has led to a need to explore how kids use these technologies for their education and entertainment (Al-jarf, 2021).

This study focuses on the maternal role rather than the paternal role, as mothers are commonly regarded as the most influential figures in shaping children's education (Puspita & Edvra, 2022). According to Novianti and Garzia (2020), the higher percentage of mothers (87.84%) engaging in children's online learning activities compared to fathers (9.46%) may be attributed to fathers' office commitments and the prevalent perception that mothers are primarily responsible for meeting children's needs and supervising their activities. Reay (2023) discusses the role of fathers who are absent or choose to be absent from day-to-day parental involvement, often acting as "helping hands" rather than equal partners in their child's education, thereby adding to mothers' workload in some cases. Additionally, Reay explores class differences, noting that middle-class fathers take a more public role but delegate day-to-day management to female partners, while working-class fathers are less involved both at school and at home. Therefore, it is important to investigate the role and influence of mothers in their children's learning experiences through YouTube.

Rasmussen et al. (2016) found that while children can incidentally pick up some knowledge from videos, they may struggle to understand it fully without active mediation from mothers. This highlights the importance of parental involvement in children's media consumption to enhance learning outcomes. When mothers actively engage with their children during video viewing, they can help clarify concepts, provide context, and encourage discussion, which are crucial for deep comprehension (Swider-Cios et al., 2023). Interacting in discussions and viewing videos alongside adults can enhance children's learning experiences and engagement in meaningful online and offline activities, fostering critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills, and empowering them to shift from passive consumers to active producers of digital content (Neumann & Herodotou, 2020b). This form of active mediation not only facilitates a deeper understanding of the content but also promotes a more meaningful learning experience for children.

Research Objectives and Questions

The study adopts a qualitative research method i.e., interviews, to obtain information from Malaysian mothers. The purpose of these interviews is to identify the mediation approaches used by these mothers and how their interactions with their children contribute to the children's learning experience. Based on these objectives, two research questions are developed:

1. How do Malaysian mothers mediate their children's learning experiences through YouTube?
2. In what ways do the mediation approaches employed by Malaysian mothers contribute to their children's learning process?

This study is crucial in discovering how Malaysian mothers use YouTube as a platform to mediate their children's learning experiences. With the growing use of digital media in education, particularly through platforms such as YouTube, understanding the specific mediation strategies mothers use in Malaysia provides vital insights into the changing dynamics of digital learning at home. Exploring the mediation strategies used by Malaysian mothers on YouTube, and their contributions to children's cognitive development hold significance in gaining an in-depth understanding of the learning process. The study fills a significant gap in the existing literature by investigating how these interactions promote cognitive, affective, and behavioural development. This study not only contributes to the understanding of digital parenting practices within the Malaysian context but also offers insights into effective ways to leverage digital platforms for educational purposes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

YouTube as an Edutainment Source for Children

YouTube is one example of a social media network that serves as an entertainment and educational tool (Holloway et al., 2013; Yaqoob et al., 2018). YouTube is also being used as an audiovisual resource or teaching aid for early childhood education by both parents and professionals, as it offers a variety of interactive and engaging educational content for preschoolers (Yaqoob et al., 2018). According to Neumann and Herodotou (2020b), video technology can enhance learning and serve as a dynamic tool for classroom activities because it can elicit various emotions, stimulate children's creativity and curiosity, aid in researching and preparing school projects on a variety of topics, and provide tutorials for engaging science activities. Caldeiro-Pedreira et al. (2022) analysed the five most-viewed channels: *Reino Infantil*, *La Granja de Zenón*, *Mundo Bitá*, *Mashaoso*, and *BabyBus* and identified that these channels share common features, aiming to educate young children about various aspects of everyday life in an entertaining manner, which aligns with early childhood education curriculum goals.

Research by Asmiarti and Winangun (2018) indicates that children demonstrate cognitive development, imagination, curiosity, and focus through YouTube engagement, a finding supported by Marsh et al. (2015) and Ofcom (2020). These studies suggest that YouTube aids in the development of creative skills in children, serving as a source of creativity and imagination (Marsh et al., 2020). Children often incorporate creative play dialogues from their environment, which they then recreate during play (Chesworth, 2016). Moreover, parents identify YouTube as a valuable tool for exposing their children to other cultural practices and customs, as well as understanding the lives of children in different cultures (Qurban, 2022). Special benefits were noted within the Muslim community, where adults reported that their children learned Islamic values from YouTube content. They observed that YouTube contributed to the development of their children's imagination, noting that their children engaged in discussions about the content they watched (Qurban, 2022).

Maternal Guidance in Children's Digital Learning Experience

Engaging in interactive discussions and watching videos together with adults can enrich children's learning experiences and participation in valuable online and offline activities. This mediation can help children cultivate critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities, empowering them to transform from passive users to active digital content creators (Neumann & Herodotou, 2020b). Parents and children can engage with videos through physical gestures and movements mirroring those seen on the screen (such as actions to accompany "Wheels on the Bus"). Parents can also discuss moral themes and lessons, relate video content to real-world experiences, regulate screen time, enable parental controls, and curate a customised playlist tailored to their children's interests and educational requirements (Neumann & Herodotou, 2020b).

Mothers play a significant role in facilitating and enhancing children's education (Puspita & Edvra, 2022) as fathers demonstrate a lower tendency to actively engage with their kids (Reay, 2023). This idea is supported by Novianti and Garzia (2020), who indicate a higher maternal involvement in children's learning, contrasting with lower paternal engagement in online learning activities, possibly due to fathers' work commitments and the societal perception that mothers are primarily responsible for childcare and education. The study also notes that while both parents are involved in their children's schoolwork, mothers generally provide more positive support than fathers, which is associated with greater educational competency. Rasmussen et al. (2016) found that while children can learn from videos, they often need mothers' guidance for better understanding. This active involvement, as suggested by Swider-Cios et al. (2023), includes clarifying concepts, providing context, and encouraging discussion, all of which are vital for deep comprehension.

Reuven Feuerstein’s Mediated Learning Experience (MLE)

This research was governed by the Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) model by Reuven Feuerstein (2003, 2010). MLE is an important aspect of human development as it is necessary to direct experiences towards understanding their underlying meanings. As the name implies, MLE occurs when a mediator mediates the world (Feuerstein, Feuerstein & Falik, 2010), making it more comprehensible by reacting to direct stimuli. This scenario indicates how MLE differs from learning through direct exposure to stimuli (see Table 1).

Table 1: Comparison between Direct Learning Experience and Mediated Learning Experience

Direct Learning Experience	Mediated Learning Experience
· Learners gain experience	· Learners gain experience
· Direct interaction with the stimuli	· Mediated interaction with the stimuli
· Learning is less likely to occur as not much modification occurs modifying the schema	· Learning most likely to occur as mediation helps modify the schema

MLE model develops following the two profound approaches to learning – the behaviourist Stimulus-Response (S-R) Model and Piaget’s Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Model. In these two models, no reference is made to the role of humans in assisting learning. Thereby, Feuerstein sees the importance of human mediation in helping the organism understand and respond to the stimuli. Of this awareness, MLE is said to serve as a detailing theory complementing Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development, in the matter of learners’ ability to do greater with the help of a more experienced collaborator (Lidz, 2002). Figure 2.1 briefly explains the development of MLE.

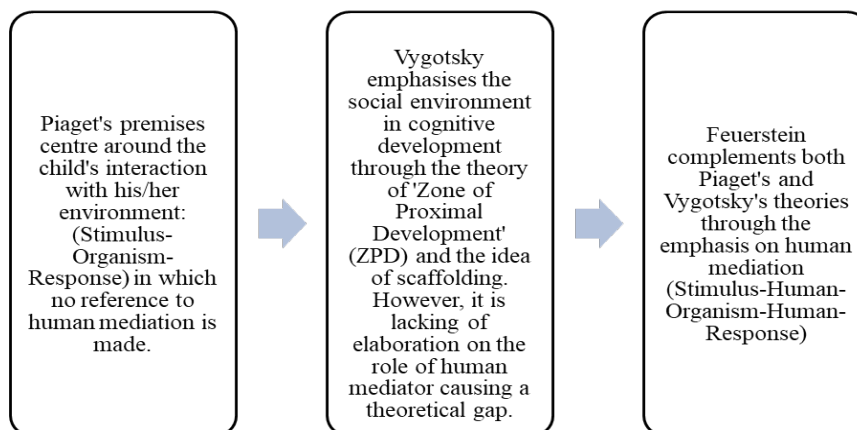


Figure 1: The Development of Mediated Learning Experience Theory

Central to the goal of providing mediation, interactions become mediational when they promote higher mental functioning within individuals (Lidz, 2002). The individual gradually internalises the MLE processes and becomes an integrated mechanism of change. As such, Feuerstein’s MLE includes a range of techniques to guide any learner intervention and it involves both the aspects of cognition and motivation (affective) (Feuerstein, Lewin-Benham, 2012). The mediator, in this context, a mother, serves to be the catalyst for leveraging thinking and driving the children to learn through using YouTube as a stimulus.

With respect to mediated interaction, Feuerstein, Feuerstein and Falik (2010) outline 12 parameters, of which the first three construe the sufficient conditions that transform an interaction into MLE: (1) Intentionality and reciprocity, (2) mediation of meaning and (3) transcendence. According to

Seng, Pou and Tan (2003), in MLE, the mediator demonstrates and shares the intention with the learner and the learner later voluntarily and reciprocally transforms the intention into a purposeful outcome. The second parameter, mediation of meaning, refers to sharing the interaction aims (Cognitive Research Program Manual Team, 1996). Showing the learner or the mediatee the significance of the interaction is essential in establishing MLE. Being clear of the intention and the rationale of certain interactions, the third parameter - mediation of transcendence is about facilitating the application of learning in different contexts and situations (Seng, Pou & Tan, 2003).

METHODOLOGY

The research utilised a qualitative approach to investigate the viewpoints and experiences of Muslim mothers in Malaysia concerning their mediation influence on children's learning experiences through YouTube. An interview protocol was developed to meet the research objectives, and data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The study employed purposive sampling to select three Malaysian (Malay) Muslim mothers of children aged three to eight years who frequently watch YouTube videos. All three informants have a solid educational background – informant 1 is a university lecturer holding a PhD degree, informant 2 is an educator at a higher learning institution holding an EdD degree, and the third informant is a stay-at-home mother (a former English lecturer) with a master's degree. Before participating in the research, all informants provided consent through consent forms, and the researchers explained the research purpose, procedure, benefits, risks, and confidentiality of their information.

The data collection involved semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions aligned with the research objectives. Interview protocols, comprising eight main questions and several supplementary sub-questions in dual languages (English and Malay), were developed before the interview sessions. The interviews were conducted in the language preferred by the informants, and the Malay transcriptions were translated during the analysis. More specific questions were posed during the interviews to better understand the mothers' mediation strategies for their children's learning experiences through YouTube. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. The data was analysed based on the vocabulary used by the mothers, which was integrated with the parameters of MLE. Based on the research objectives, the themes are organised into two sections: 1) Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) parameters, and 2) Children's learning experience. We highlight the first three parameters, which are considered as sufficient conditions that transform an interaction into MLE: (1) Intentionality and reciprocity, (2) mediation of meaning, and (3) transcendence.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This qualitative study focuses on exploring the in-depth phenomena experienced by the selected informants. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the specific experiences and viewpoints of the three participants, but it does not provide a basis for making broad generalisations about the wider population. In Addition, the study did not investigate the relationship between the mothers' educational backgrounds and the mediating strategies they used because such an investigation was beyond the scope of the study. The primary aim was to explore and understand the general mediation strategies employed by the mothers in guiding their children's YouTube usage, rather than examining how these strategies might vary according to educational background. Focusing solely on the mediation strategies without delving into the influence of educational background allowed the researchers to maintain a clear and manageable scope for the study. This focus ensured that the data collected was rich and detailed, providing deep insights into the mothers' mediation practices and their children's online learning experiences. Future research could expand on these findings by exploring the potential impact of various demographic factors, including educational background, on parental mediation strategies.

FINDINGS

The data from the interviews was analysed and tabulated into two themes based on the research objectives (RO):

Themes	Research Objectives (ROs)
1) Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) Parameters	RO1: How do Malaysian mothers mediate their children's learning experiences through YouTube?
2) Children's Learning Experience	RO2: In what ways do the mediation approaches employed by Malaysian mothers contribute to their children's learning process?

Table 2 below presents the mediation strategies employed by the three informants, categorised according to the MLE Parameters.

Table 2: Mediation strategies used by Malaysian mothers

Theme 1: Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) parameters	RO1: How do Malaysian mothers mediate their children's learning experiences through YouTube?
a) Intentionality and Reciprocity: Mothers actively engage with their children while watching YouTube videos.	<p>Asking questions: Informant 1 ● <i>I'll ask question like 'Apa dia buat tuuu (What is he doing?)' Apa jadi lepas ni? (What's going to happen next?)'</i> Informant 2 ● <i>I'll ask my kids 'Do you think the rocket can really fly?'</i></p> <p>Discussing the content: Informant 1 ● <i>I'll give comments like 'Eh...pandainya dia (Wow... he's so clever)'/</i> ● <i>Komen-komen lah kalau ada yang negatif-negatif, contoh kawan buat macam tu (I'll comment if there are any negative ones, for example, if a friend mistreats another friend or speaks harshly... I will inform my kids that they shouldn't do that)</i></p> <p>Singing along Informant 1 ● <i>Sometimes I'll sing along / clapping hands with my kids while watching YouTube</i> Informant 3 ● <i>When they watch baby bus..aa they like singin along with the singer in this video, so I just join them, so I think it's quite a bonding time for us as well</i></p>
b) Mediation of Meaning: Mothers facilitate their children's understanding	<p>Providing explanation/ clarification to questions asked by the kids Informant 2 ● <i>I'll respond to their questions like - 'is this really true mama? Is this really happening to this world?'</i> Informant 3 ● <i>I'll usually explain to my kids - questions such as Mummy, apa maksud written w.r.l.t.t.e.n. (What does written mean?) -oh written, written maksudnya penulisan (it means penulisan), write tu apa? - Write tu tulis (What is write? – write is tulis)</i> ● <i>Mummy, apa maksud lemak manis dlm lagu ni?(What's the meaning of lemak manis in this song?) So I'll explain the meaning</i></p>
c) Transcendence: Mothers encourage critical thinking/ reflection/ application of	<p>Connecting the content to real-life experiences Informant 1 ● <i>I'll remind them not to waste food /be patient just like what they learned from the Omar Hana songs</i></p>

the knowledge gained from YouTube	Informant 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>My son is obsessed with trucks/ tractors, he loves watching Blippi every day. And whenever we go out and he sees cars or trucks/ tractors any other transports, he will be so excited and I'll interact with him.</i>
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Based on the findings tabulated, the analysis reveals several key aspects of how Malaysian mothers mediate their children's learning experiences through YouTube, aligning with Feuerstein's Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) parameters.

In terms of *Intentionality and Reciprocity*, all three informants described actively engaging with their children while watching YouTube videos. This includes asking questions, singing along, commenting, and encouraging their children to interact with the content by predicting what will happen next. This active participation enhances the learning experience and fosters a sense of shared understanding between mothers and children. In addition, the mothers play a crucial role in clarifying and explaining concepts to their children, which also aligns with the second MLE parameter (*Mediation of Meaning*). They explain new words or concepts encountered in videos, ensuring that children understand the content they are viewing and facilitating meaningful learning. The third parameter (*Transcendence*) is evident when the mothers encourage critical thinking and the application of knowledge gained from YouTube to real-life situations. They connect the content to real-life experiences, reinforcing important lessons such as not wasting food or being patient, as learned from educational songs or videos. Besides that, watching YouTube videos together is seen as a bonding activity for the informants and their children. It provides an opportunity for quality time together and strengthens their relationship. Overall, the analysis highlights mothers' important role in guiding their children's learning experiences on YouTube. Their active involvement, mediation of meaning, and encouragement of critical thinking significantly enrich the educational value of YouTube content for children.

Table 3 illustrates the learning experiences of children through YouTube.

Table 3: Children's Learning Experience

Theme 2: Children's Learning Experience	RO2: In what ways do the mediation approaches employed by Malaysian mothers contribute to their children's learning process?
a) Cognitive skills	<p>Language /Vocabulary skills</p> <p>Informant 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>My kids learn new vocabs - I did not teach them, but they learnt from the channel. They will come and talk to me in English although the language used at home is Malay.</i> <p>Informant 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Anak-anak sering bertanya makna perkataan baru yang dia belajar dari YouTube (My kids often ask about the meanings of new words they learn from YouTube).</i> ● <i>Anak2 juga tonton channel Syukri Arab - memperkenalkn Bahasa Arab lebih santai , dan Qawiy - hafal alquran (The kids also watch the Syukri Arab channel, which introduces Arabic in a more relaxed manner, and Qawiy, which focuses on memorizing the Quran).</i> <p>General Knowledge</p> <p>Informant 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>When my..children aa..watch blippi, they can actually aaa..connect what they watch on blippi's video with..with what takes place in the real world</i> <p>Informant 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Anak-anak saya ada tonton saluran faktaw - fakta2 yg berada di sekeliling kita (My children also watch faktaw channel - facts about things around us).</i>
b) Affective skills	<p>Curiosity/ Imagination</p> <p>Informant 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Mereka nak jawapan berkenaan cerita2 nabi ni atau kisah zmn dahulu termasuk Ashabul Kahfi. Benda2 ni trigger dia pny...org kata sifat ingin tahu. (They want answers about stories of prophets or ancient tales including the story of Ashabul</i>

	<p><i>Kahfi. These things trigger their...curious nature.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Other examples of questions by the kids:</i> <i>"Mummy, ikan nun yg telan nabi yunus tu mana besar dengan my glodon?"</i> <i>(Mummy, the fish that swallowed Prophet Yunus, was it bigger than my glodon?)</i> <i>"Mummy nabi adam tu betul ke dari tanah? Dia dari syurga ke?"</i> <i>(Mummy, was Prophet Adam really made from soil? Was he from paradise?)</i> <p>Values/ Empathy Informant 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>My kids learn a lot of moral values through YouTube.</i> <p>Informant 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>My kids can differentiate the good and bad content as I always explain to them.</i>
<p>c) Psychomotor</p>	<p>Informant 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Kalau channel how to draw, ha itu pun saya suka yg mana ank2 ni dia jadi suka melukis, dan diorg ni lukis ikut step2 yg dia ajar tu..dan nmpk cantik, sesuai dgn umur, cara nk lukis gajah, burung, rumah.so dia ada step tu, bkn main lukis je. (if it's a channel about how to draw, I also like it because my children become interested in drawing. They follow the steps taught in the videos and it looks beautiful, and suitable for their age. For example, how to draw an elephant, bird, or house. So, there are these steps, not just drawing as they like).</i>

The data reveals that Malaysian mothers' mediation efforts have a significant impact on their children's YouTube learning experiences. Children's cognitive skills are significantly enhanced, particularly in language and vocabulary acquisition, as they acquire new words and speak in languages not typically used at home. Furthermore, YouTube exposure broadens their general knowledge, allowing students to connect video content to real-life situations. The platform also stimulates affective skills such as curiosity and imagination, since children express a strong interest in stories of Prophets and ancient tales, demonstrating an increased curiosity about their surroundings. Furthermore, values and empathy are nurtured, as children learn moral principles and develop the ability to distinguish between good and bad content. Children's psychomotor skills are also influenced positively when they participate in activities such as painting, following tutorials, and increasing their motor skills. In summary, the evidence suggests that Malaysian mediation on YouTube considerably impacts their children's overall development, enriching their learning experiences in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study investigates how the selected Malaysian mothers regulate their children's YouTube learning experiences, aligning with Reuven Feuerstein's Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) model. The mothers' active engagement, such as asking questions, singing along, and encouraging predictions, corresponds to the MLE parameter of Intentionality and Reciprocity, fostering a reciprocal learning environment. This active participation transforms children from passive viewers to active learners, enhancing cognitive skills, particularly in language and vocabulary acquisition, as supported by Neumann and Herodotou (2020b). Additionally, the Mediation of Meaning is evident as mothers explain new words or concepts, ensuring children understand the content, which corresponds with studies done by Rasmussen et al. (2016) and Swider-Cios et al. (2023).

The study also highlights that watching YouTube videos together serves as a bonding activity, providing quality time and strengthening the mother-child relationship. This emotional connection enhances the overall learning experience, as children incorporate dialogues and ideas from their environment into their play, inspired by interactions with their parents (Chesworth, 2016). Moreover, the parameter of Transcendence is demonstrated when mothers encourage their children to apply knowledge from YouTube to real-life situations, reinforcing important values and behaviours. This approach nurtures curiosity and imagination and helps children distinguish between good and harmful content, aligning with Qurban (2022). Additionally, YouTube positively influences children's psychomotor skills through activities like painting and following tutorials, emphasising its role as a comprehensive educational tool. Overall, the study confirms that Malaysian mothers' mediation strategies significantly enrich their

children's YouTube learning experiences, fostering cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development which is consistent with the MLE model.

In terms of educational outcomes, the findings correspond with broader research on the role of digital media in early childhood education. The enhancement of children's cognitive skills, particularly in language and vocabulary acquisition, supports previous research that highlights YouTube as a valuable educational resource (Holloway et al., 2013; Yaqoob et al., 2018). The enhancement of affective skills, such as curiosity and imagination, aligns with Asmiarti and Winangun (2018) and Marsh et al. (2020), who suggest YouTube fosters creativity and imaginative play.

In conclusion, Malaysian mothers' mediation strategies have a profound impact on their children's YouTube learning experiences. These strategies support the development of cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor skills, offering a comprehensive approach to learning that integrates digital media into everyday educational practices. By understanding and implementing effective mediation techniques, parents can enhance their children's engagement with digital content, promoting meaningful and interactive learning experiences. Future research should continue to explore the influence of various demographic factors on parental mediation strategies to further optimise the educational potential of digital platforms like YouTube.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researchers would like to convey their utmost gratitude to Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), specifically UiTM Kampus Permatang Pauh, for the provision of equipment, venue, and other resources.

FUNDING

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Ab. Latif, N. A. and Zulkifli, C. N. planned the research, overseeing data collection and analysis, developing the problem statement, and establishing study objectives. Shaari, A. made significant contributions to developing the theoretical framework, laying a solid foundation for the study. Zulkifli, C. N., and Shaari, A. contributed significantly to providing key insights and helped shape the research, analysis, and manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

I/We certify that the article is the Authors' and Co-Authors' original work. The article has not received prior publication and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. This research/manuscript has not been submitted for publication nor has it been published in whole or in part elsewhere. We testify to the fact that all Authors have contributed significantly to the work, validity and legitimacy of the data and its interpretation for submission to Jurnal Intelek.

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