

# CHILD PROTECTION RECIPE: PARENTING GUIDELINE TO PREVENT CHILDREN FROM CYBERSEX ADDICTION

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## ABSTRACT

As many as 3,980 children between the ages of 10 to 19 years old were pregnant out of wedlock in 2018 and every year up to 100 babies are dumped in Malaysia, where a majority of them were dead when found. Based on previous research undertaken surrounding this issue, it shows that one of the main factors is due to imitation of pornographic material by the children (Bahori & Ismail, 2018). The statistic shows the seriousness of cybersex addiction as a growing phenomenon which brings about significant impact to children. Moreover, if this issue fails to be prevented by the relevant parties such as parents, guardians, society, and government agencies, it will result in detrimental effects on children and the country, since children are the future generation and talents in the country. Thus, their healthy growth and development should be prioritised. Due to this gap, this paper aims to present an innovative idea which is known as 'Child protection recipe: Parenting guidelines to prevent children from cybersex addiction'. Through a review of the parenting guidelines, this paper has found that if parents abide by these guidelines provided in the book, parents can prevent their children from succumbing to cybersex addiction effectively. Hence, parents require a proper parenting guideline to provide proper supervision and monitoring mechanisms for their children.

**Keywords:** Cybersex addiction, children, parents

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, various forms of high-tech innovations and inventions have been developed due to globalisation and modernisation. Even though high-tech innovations such as modern applications and software provide benefits to people, however, technological advancement also creates negative impacts on those who unethically use them, especially children. Due to this situation, Hanif (2017) claimed that most children who are addicted to the Internet are a result of excessive use. This issue occurs when parents do not provide proper supervision and monitoring mechanisms for their children. Hence, to curb this issue, this paper aims to present an innovative idea which is known as 'Child protection recipe: parenting guidelines to prevent children from cybersex addiction. This parenting guideline is divided into six sections, which covers (1) definition of cybersex addiction; (2) factors contributing to cybersex addiction; (3) implication of cybersex addiction; (4) privacy settings; (5) phenomenon of cybersex addiction at international level; and (6) phenomenon of cybersex addiction at the national level. In addition, based on a review of the parenting guideline, this paper has discovered several uniqueness in the parenting guideline, such as (1) parenting guidelines are easily accessible and downloadable; (2) parenting guidelines not available in Malaysia; and (3) parenting guidelines are created as an aspiration and are intended to facilitate parenting to prevent children from cybersex addiction.

## 2. CHILD PROTECTION RECIPE: PARENTING GUIDELINES TO PREVENT CHILDREN FROM CYBERSEX ADDICTION

From reviewing the parenting guideline to prevent children from cybersex addiction, this paper has found several guidelines, such as (1) definition of cybersex addiction; (2) factors contributing to

cybersex addiction; (3) implications of cybersex addiction; (4) privacy settings; (5) phenomenon of cybersex addiction at international level; and (6) phenomenon of cybersex addiction at the national level.

**Definition of cybersex addiction**—This section explains the definition of cybersex addiction. Even though there are several definitions, however, this paper relies on one universal definition from Young (2008). Young (2008) defined 'cybersex' as an act of viewing, downloading, and trading online pornography or participating in adult fantasy role-playing rooms. This brings about a pivotal question: what if these children succumb to addiction? This scenario will bring harm and risk to children rather than pleasure and satisfaction. This is because children are still young and fragile and; they do not have the capacity and capability to think rationally when dealing with sexual activities, especially when they are online. This situation will be becoming worsen if proper monitoring and supervision mechanisms are absent from parents.

**Factors of cybersex addiction**—In exploring further, parenting guidelines to prevent cybersex addiction among children also outline several factors contributing to cybersex addiction, such as (1) advancement of technology (Nahar et al., 2018); (2) parental neglect (Shahimi, 2018); (3) peer influence (Abu Bakar, 2007); and (4) individual factor (Norman & Othman, 2020). Technology is recognised as one of the main factors contributing to cybersex addiction among children since they are not properly monitored and supervised by their parents when they are online. Following the advancement of technology, proper parental monitoring and supervision mechanisms are also important in preventing children from becoming victims of cybercrime. Aligned with parental responsibility, peer influence also needs to be monitored and supervised by parents to curb their children from getting involved in several social problems. Even though some children receive proper monitoring and supervision from their parents when they are online, this study argues that since there are several internal and external factors contributing to cybersex addiction, there is no one solid solution. This is because everyone needs to play an important role, not only children but also parents (Nahar et al., 2018; Shahimi, 2018; Abu Bakar, 2007; Norman & Othman, 2020).

**Implications of cybersex addiction**—The third section in the parenting guideline is the implication of cybersex addiction. This section aims to educate parents about the consequences of excessive use of the Internet among children. If parents fail to address the factors contributing to cybersex addiction among children; hence, this issue will create numerous negative consequences such as (1) psychological damages (Norman & Othman, 2020); (2) pre-marital sex (Alavi et al., 2012); and (3) family relationship (Schneider, 2000). Watching pornographic material at an early age may bring about psychological implications such as weakening children's control functions as well as impairing memory. Subsequently, following the psychological damages, pre-marital sex is also recognised as one of the negative consequences of cybersex addiction involving children. Pre-marital sex happens when children try to imitate pornographic material with other people. Due to this situation, several children have sex before marriage and a girl may become pregnant out of wedlock. Furthermore, aside from pre-marital sex, cybersex addiction can also affect the children's family relationships in the future. This is because every child that is exposed to pornographic material at an early age, is highly possible that they become addicted to cybersex until they become adults. As a result of this, their partner would feel betrayed, rejected, abandoned, devastated, lonely, isolated, humiliated, jealous, angry, and lose self-esteem, etc. All of this will indirectly affect their family relationships. This shows that parents need to play an important role to curb this issue effectively since children are the future generation and talents of the country (Schneider, 2000; Alavi et al., 2012; Norman & Othman, 2020).

**Privacy setting**—Privacy settings are the fourth section under the parenting guideline to prevent children from cybersex addiction. Under this section, parents will be guided on how to impose privacy settings under parenting control for their children's social media accounts such as YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, and many others. By knowing the privacy settings as one of the parenting control mechanisms, parents can control the activities carried out by their children. This is because most children explore pornographic materials through their social media accounts and on the Internet. For instance, under YouTube's privacy setting for parenting control, parents can customize the content of their children's YouTube on the parental guide such as blocking content, setting specified content settings, and approved content only.

***The phenomenon of cybersex addiction at the international level***—This section presents few international cases surrounding the issue of cybersex addiction among children. Based on the study conducted by Chaudhur et al. (2017), the authors discovered that there was a 28 years old man who was married for only four years as he had marriage problems due to pornography addiction, making him uninterested in sexual activity with his wife. Through further investigation, Chaudhur et al. (2017) found that this 28 years old man had engaged in sexual activities at an early age. He and his friends watched pornographic materials since he was 15 years old. Initially, he only watched pornographic materials infrequently, but gradually it became a night habit and was followed by masturbation. He also increased the amount of time spent watching pornographic materials, to achieve the desired level of pleasure and satisfaction. In addition, he spent three to four hours every night watching pornographic material. If he did not do so, he will become distressed and irritated.

***The phenomenon of cybersex addiction at the national level***—This section explains the phenomenon of cybersex addiction in the Malaysian context by presenting several significant cases. Hawafi et al. (2017) stated that PornMD recorded Malaysians making an average of 22,000 searches per day, which ranked Malaysia at 19th place in the world for pornographic searching. Due to this situation, there are 28,671 children addicted to pornography and a majority of them are aged between 14 to 17 years old. This case shows that parents need to provide proper monitoring and supervision mechanisms when their children are online.

### 3. IMPORTANCE OF THIS GUIDELINE

Based on the development of this guideline, this paper outlines its importance in strengthening child protection and privacy in the Malaysian context, which includes: (1) parents to have a clear view on how to control the cybersex addiction involving children; (2) parents can forecast the behaviour of the children in cyber world addiction; and (3) parents be cognizant and more concerned in regards to cybersex addiction among children.

***Parents need to have a clear view on how to control the cybersex addiction among children***—Parents need to have a clear view on how to control cybersex addiction among children. This is the most pivotal parenting guideline, to prevent children from cybersex addiction. Parents and guardians need to possess knowledge on how to control their children from involving cybersex addiction, such as (1) installing a control panel; (2) limit the use of gadgets; (3) take children for leisure activities; etc, to prevent the children from cybersex addiction. If parents fail to follow all the guidelines that have been provided under the parenting guideline, the issue of cyber addiction involving children will be rampant.

***Parents can forecast the behaviour of the children in cybersex addiction***—The reason why this parenting guideline is created is for parents to forecast the behaviour of their children in cybersex addiction. For instance, according to Pitchan and Mohd (2018), most cybersex activities happen when children sit alone in front of their gadgets for hours due to watching pornography material and conversing with other strangers to arouse their lust. Based on the example, parents should limit the time usage of gadgets among children to prevent them from involving cybersex addiction. This is because if children spend long hours in front of gadgets, children will likely become addicted to the cybersex.

***Parents should be cognizant and more concerned more in regards to cybersex addiction among children***—The last importance of this parenting guideline is that parents should be cognizant and more concerned in regards to cybersex addiction among children. This is because if parents leave their children without proper monitoring and supervision, children may become addicted to technology. Due to this, it may lead children to become addicted to cybersex. This shows that parents and guardians need to be aware and concern with the healthy growth and development of the children to prevent them from involving cybersex addiction activities.

### 4. NOVELTY

Based on a review of the parenting guideline to prevent children from cybersex addiction, this paper has discovered several uniqueness, such as (1) parenting guidelines are easily accessible and downloadable; (2) parenting guidelines not available in Malaysia; and (3) parenting guidelines are created as an aspiration and are intended to facilitate parenting to prevent children from cybersex addiction.

**Easily accessible and downloadable**— The first uniqueness of this parenting guideline is that it is easily accessible and downloadable. This is because this parenting guideline is in the form of an e-book. Therefore, if parents want to prevent their children from cybersex addiction, they only need to search for this parenting guideline to obtain the necessary information. The guideline can effectively be used as it is highly accessible.

**Not available in Malaysia**—Parenting guidelines to prevent children from cybersex addiction is not available in Malaysia yet. Due to this situation, this paper aims to present innovative ideas in creating this parenting guideline to prevent children from cybersex addiction. According to Hawafi et al. (2017), the reason why parenting guidelines are not available in Malaysia yet is that cybersex addiction is still considered taboo and too sensitive to be discussed among Asian families. In addition, the authors also claimed that the actions of parents who refuse to educate their children about sex can lead to cybersex addiction among children. This is because if parents fail to educate children about sex, it will motivate children to explore more on their own without parental or guardian supervision. Thus, with this parenting guideline, parents can prevent children from cybersex addiction.

**Easy to understand**—The last uniqueness of this parenting guideline is that it is easy to understand. This is because this parenting guideline was created by using infographic materials instead of many words to make sure all parents understand what is to be conveyed about cybersex addiction and to attract parents' attention. In addition, although this parenting guideline is provided for parents to prevent children from cybersex addiction, this guideline is also suitable for all parties including the children themselves.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, children are still young and fragile, and; they do not have the capability and capacity to protect themselves. Thus, children need proper supervision and monitoring mechanisms from their parents. Due to this situation, parenting guidelines to prevent cybersex addiction among children are very important to ensure parents obtain the necessary knowledge and skills to prevent their children from getting involved in cybersex addiction, to not hinder healthy growth and development.

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