Thai children's new media use at home:
Intra-family communication and reverse socialisation
การใช้สื่อใหม่ที่บ้านของเด็กไทย :
การสื่อสารในครอบครัวและการขัดเกลาทางสังคมที่พลิกผัน

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Abstract

The growth of new media has enabled children and young people to connect with the world in diverse ways. Their use of new media at home has also redefined intra- family communication and altered their role as an agent of socialisation within the family. This paper aims to present a review of the relevant literature on children's use of new media in Thai families and provide an account of parental mediation strategies, describing how parents optimise their children's use of new media at home. The paper also provides the cultural background of Thai families, specifically values, beliefs and forms of communication within that context, as well as the discussion of how digital competence becomes an important factor resulting in reverse socialisation within the Thai family.

The parental dilemmas revealed in this paper include parents' perceived benefits (educational values) and concerns (excessive use of new media, exposure to online risks and harm, popularity of mobile phones) over their children's use of new media technologies. Moreover, the social value of academic achievement encourages time restrictions of new media use as parents prefer their children to spend more time on studying or doing offline activities. However, the types of mediation implemented by parents are also determined by the age of their children, with more restrictive types used mainly with younger children. Also, Thai culture and social values, including an emphasis on parent- child ties, deference to authority and family values; a form of hierarchical culture which assumes that children and young people need to respect and obey parents; and the concept of "Bun- Khun" (gratitude), tentatively results in the way Thai parents choose to employ their parental mediation strategies. However, it is suggested that parents' use of proactive mediation allow greater agency for the child to participate in dialogue and express their ideas regarding new media issues, and this was especially the case for young people who actively seek autonomy and independence.

The paper also highlights the importance of digital competence as a significant factor in parental mediation and children's negotiation approaches to using new media. Essentially, this is an area in which reverse socialisation occurs within the Thai family context. The implications suggested include an emphasis on more effective support systems, which are needed in Thailand to guide Thai parents in developing their digital competence so that they can enable their children to maximize the benefits derived from the opportunities presented by new media technologies while still keeping them safe from online risks and harm.

Keywords: New media, Thai, family, children, communication, parental mediation

บทคัดย่อ

การเติบโตของสื่อใหม่ทำให้เด็กได้เชื่อมโยงกับโลกภายนอกในรูปแบบที่หลากหลาย การใช้สื่อใหม่ที่
บ้านของเด็กก่อให้เกิดนิยามใหม่ของการสื่อสารภายในครอบครัวและปรับเปลี่ยนบทบาทของผู้ทำหน้าที่ขัด
เกลาทางสังคมภายในครอบครัว บทความนี้มุ่งที่จะนำเสนอภาพการใช้สื่อใหม่ของเด็กไทยในบริบทครอบครัว
จากการทบทวนวรรณกรรมที่เกี่ยวข้อง ซึ่งรวมถึงกลวิธีที่พ่อแม่ดูแลการใช้สื่อใหม่ของลูก โดยบทความนี้ยังได้
นำเสนอแง่มุมด้านวัฒนธรรมครอบครัวไทย โดยเฉพาะในประเด็นของค่านิยม ความเชื่อ และรูปแบบการ
สื่อสารที่เกิดขึ้น และยังได้อภิปรายในประเด็นของสมรรถนะทางดิจิทัลซึ่งเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญที่ส่งผลต่อการขัด
เกลาทางสังคมที่พลิกผันด้วย

บทความนี้ได้แสดงให้เห็นถึงทางเลือกที่ต้องเผชิญของพ่อแม่จากการรับรู้ทั้งข้อดีและข้อเสียของสื่อใหม่
ที่ส่งผลต่อความกังวลในด้านต่าง ๆ ทั้งการใช้สื่อใหม่มากเกินไป การเข้าถึงความเสี่ยงและอันตรายออนไลน์
การใช้โทรศัพท์มือถือ ยิ่งไปกว่านั้น ค่านิยมทางสังคมที่ให้ความสำคัญกับการประสบความสำเร็จทางการศึกษา
ที่กระตุ้นให้เกิดการควบคุมเรื่องเวลาในการใช้สื่อใหม่ของลูก เนื่องจากพ่อแม่ต้องการให้ลูกใช้เวลาในการอ่าน
หนังสือเรียนหรือทำกิจกรรมอื่นๆ มากกว่าใช้เวลาออนไลน์ อย่างไรก็ตาม วิธีที่พ่อแม่ใช้ในการดูแลลูกเรื่องการ
ใช้สื่อขึ้นอยู่กับอายุของลูกเป็นสำคัญเช่นกัน ยิ่งลูกอายุน้อย พ่อแม่มักจะใช้การควบคุมเป็นหลัก ยิ่งไปกว่านั้น
วัฒนธรรมและค่านิยมทางสังคมไทย ซึ่งหมายรวมถึงการให้คุณค่ากับความผูกพันระหว่างพ่อแม่และลูก การ
ยอมทำตามอำนาจและค่านิยมของครอบครัว วัฒนธรรมการให้ความสำคัญกับลำดับอาวุโส ซึ่งหมายความว่า
ลูกจำเป็นต้องเคารพและเชื่อฟังพ่อแม่ และแนวคิดเรื่องของ "บุญคุณ" ซึ่งมีแนวโน้มที่จะส่งผลต่อวิธีการที่พ่อ
แม่ชาวไทยเลือกใช้ในการดูแลการใช้สื่อใหม่ของลูก

บทความนี้เน้นย้ำความสำคัญของสมรรถนะทางดิจิทัลในฐานะที่เป็นปัจจัยสำคัญในการดูแลการใช้สื่อ
ใหม่และการต่อรองของลูก ที่สำคัญคือ สิ่งนี้ส่งผลให้เกิดการขัดเกลาทางสังคมที่พลิกผันในบริบทครอบครัวไทย
ในประเด็นของกลยุทธ์การดูแลการใช้สื่อใหม่ของลูก การดูแลเชิงรุก (Proactive mediation) ที่เปิดโอกาสให้
เด็กได้มีอิสระในการมีส่วนร่วมปฏิสัมพันธ์และแสดงความคิดเห็นเกี่ยวกับประเด็นต่างๆ ในการใช้สื่อใหม่
โดยเฉพาะวัยรุ่นที่ต้องการสิทธิในการเป็นตัวเองและอิสระในการแสดงออก ประเด็นเสนอแนะสำคัญที่คือการ
เสนอให้มีระบบที่มีประสิทธิภาพที่สามารถสนับสนุนพ่อแม่ในการดูแลการใช้สื่อของลูก ด้วยการให้ความรู้
สนับสนุน และชี้แนะแนวทางให้พ่อแม่มีทักษะและความรู้ทางดิจิทัล เพื่อจะสามารถพัฒนาสมรรถนะในการใช้
สื่อใหม่และเพิ่มพูนทักษะในการใช้กลยุทธ์ในการดูแลการใช้สื่อใหม่ของลูกได้อย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ เพื่อให้ลูก
ปลอดภัยและสามารถใช้ประโยชน์จากสื่อใหม่ได้อย่างเต็มที่

คำสำคัญ :   สื่อใหม่, ไทย, ครอบครัว, เด็ก, การสื่อสาร, การดูแลการใช้สื่อโดยพ่อแม่

1. Introduction

Home is considered the primary social setting where children spend their days and are conditioned by certain understandings of childhood and how adults should behave towards and with children (Mayall, 1994). Recent studies have emphasised the significance of the home as an important "ecological context" for children's development, and "the home environment" has been found to be a primary setting where children's behaviours develop (Terras & Ramsay, 2016, p.1). Plowman (2015) identifies the role of the home as "a site within which the child and their family construct culture during their everyday interactions" (p. 39). Culture is an important contextual factor that shapes children's behaviour, as they enter the culture through their families in infancy (Terras & Ramsay, 2016; Corsaro, 2011). Evidently, this influence is reflected in child-rearing and parenting practices within families (Terras & Ramsay, 2016). Thus, the family is considered significant, as it is not only a primary social context for children and young people when they experience the outside world but also a major influencing agent for children's cognitive and psycho-social development, including their use of new media technologies (Corsaro, 2011; Plowman et al., 2012; Symons et al., 2019). It can be said that socialisation and sociocultural influences within the family have a significant impact on children's thoughts and behaviours (Livingstone and Das, 2010, p.45); consequently, the home and the family environment will greatly influence parents' engagement with new media.

During the last decade, children and young people are the primary internet users; however; new media use by children and young people at home provokes mixed reactions. On the one hand, there are a great number of benefits for them; on the other, new media can expose them to a number of potential online threats that can catch them unawares which may cause disagreements between children and parents. The introduction of new media at home has been identified as redefining communication within the family (Koniski, 2018, p.155), and altering how family members interact within the home environment (Blum-Rose & Livingstone, 2016). As suggested by Patrikakou (2016), "technology has always altered the nature of social interactions, including those within the family" (p.12). Interestingly, Terras and Ramsay (2016) suggest that "the home context not only shapes children's use of [new media] technology, the use of [new media] technology within the home is also influencing the nature and social dynamics of the home contexts itself" (p. 6). However, parents' motivation for incorporating new media into their children's lives may vary from culture to culture. It is not surprising that many parents see value in their children using it for a variety of purposes –

education, entertainment, safer leisure at home than outside, and a convenient way to occupy children (Nathanson, 2015). Therefore, parents' motivations for encouraging their children's new media use are an initial cause which leads to the effects of new media on parent-children communication. The issue that needs to be taken into consideration is how to find a compromise between parents' and children's expectations and the actual circumstances at home.

Thus, this paper will provide an account of parental mediation strategies, describing how parents optimise their children's use of new media at home. Moreover, this paper aims to provide insights into children's new media use in the context of Thai families; therefore, it is necessary to present a review of the relevant literature on children's use of new media in Thailand and Thai families. Essentially, an understanding of the cultural background of Thai families, specifically values, beliefs and forms of communication within that context, is crucial to better comprehend parent-child communication regarding children's new media use. The discussion on the gap between parents and children, in terms of skills and knowledge of new media, also shows the limitation of the extent to which parents engage with their children's new media use. This background information will pave the way for a better understanding of children's use of media, and how family life shapes their exposure and responses to media (Nathanson, 2015).

2. Concept of parents' socialisation roles and parental mediation

Parents' socialisation and sociocultural influences within the family have a significant impact on children's thoughts and behaviours (Livingstone and Das, 2010, p.45). Being "the most influential people in the development and socialisation of children" (Sonck, Nikken & de Haan., 2013, p.96), parents are accountable for their children's new media behaviour and its effect on their well-being (Shin & Huh, 2011; Shin & Li, 2017). Nevertheless, there is a powerful interplay between a society's technological advancements, family structures, and social values. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the basic concepts around parents' roles as agents of socialisation and the development of theories about parental mediation in order to broaden the comprehension of intra-family communication that results from children's new media habits.

2.1 Parents' socialisation role in children's new media use

In today's media-rich society, parents are responsible for balancing the benefits and potential dangers that their children may encounter through their use of new media (Symons et al., 2019). This seems to cause parents dilemmas regarding whether to support their

children's engagement with the online world or to protect them from online risks and harm (Marsh et al., 2015; Livingstone et al., 2017). As such, "interpersonal interactions about media that take place between parents and their children, play a role in socialising children into society" (Clark, 2011, p.325).

Previous research demonstrates that parents are likely to overestimate their control over their children's exposure to inappropriate content or misconduct online (Chao & Cheon, 2005; Liau et al., 2008; Shin, 2015). It is likely that children engage in risky behaviour without their parents knowing. It may not be easy for parents to know exactly what their children do online, or how they are affected by other external socialisation agents, especially their peers (Liau et al., 2008). However, Shin (2015) suggests that parents tend to hold "a self-serving bias", which can be an obstacle in their acceptance of the fact that they do not have much control over their children's online behaviour (p.660), since they are motivated to maintain positive self-perceptions of being "good parents" (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2002, as cited in Shin, 2015, p.660).

There is conflicting evidence regarding what motivates parents' involvement in their children's new media practices. Previous research indicates that parents are likely to moderate their children's media use to try to protect them from negative media impacts, especially to their health and well-being (Clark, 2011; Nathanson, 2001; Shin, 2015). According to Lim's (2008) study, parents impose some form of control over the nature and duration of their children's new media use in order to assuage their concerns about excessive use or misuse of new media. Moreover, her study indicates that when parents show greater involvement and interest in their children's new media use, it is usually for positive rather than negative purposes.

However, an effective parenting style in one culture may not be as effective in another. Even in one country, there may be a variety of parenting styles in different areas for different groups of people. Even among Thai parents residing in the same region and belonging to the same cultural background, there are different styles of parenting due to the influence of globalisation, westernisation, and new technological impacts (Nanthamongkolchai et al., 2012, p.99). Therefore, it is necessary to understand the social changes which not only brought about important changes in Thai family structures but also led to changes in socialisation and communication in families, especially with regards to new media practices.

2.2 Development of parental mediation

Given the aim of mitigating the negative impact of media on children, evidence shows that parents attempt to employ various interpersonal communication strategies, such as controlling, supervising, or interpreting media content (Clark, 2011; Festl & Gniewosz, 2019). Existing evidence indicates that parents contribute to their children's safe media use by adopting different methods to manage their children's access to, exposure to, and use of media, which has been referred to as "parental mediation" (Nathanson, 2001). This term has been employed in media research since the birth of interest in the effects of media technologies on children – beginning with parents managing their children's exposure to television – before the emergence of new media (Nathanson, 1999; Clark, 2011; Symons et al., 2019). Clearly, parental mediation research highlights the role of parents as primary socialisation agents, with regards to media influence on children.

In terms of a theoretical approach, scholars have developed different studies in order to bridge the gap between old and new media (Clark, 2011; Lim, 2008; Livingstone & Bober, 2006; Livingstone, 2008; Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Symons et al., 2019). As stated by Blum-Rose and Livingstone (2016), "although the parental mediation literature was historically developed in relation to television viewing, recent research recognises that the adoption of digital and online technologies at home, school and work is changing how families interact in and around media" (p.9). Thus far, existing evidence indicates a wide range of strategies that have been adopted by parents to manage their children's use of new media (Festl & Gniewosz, 2019), such as restrictive mediation (e.g. setting rules), active mediation (e.g. talking about and discussing online content), co-using (e.g. sharing media experiences by co-viewing online content), technological mediation (e.g. using monitoring software [Eastin et al., 2006]), restrictions on interactions (e.g. setting rules on appropriate online behaviour [Livingstone & Helsper, 2008]), monitoring (e.g. post hoc checking of internet activities [Livingstone et al., 2011]), and supervision (e.g. being around or nearby when the child is online [Nikken & Jansz, 2014]).

Based on parents' implementation of different mediation strategies (Shin & Li, 2017), the basic common practices can be identified as "a coordination process between parent and child: parents' restriction, monitoring or supervising, and discussion of media use with their children" (Naab, 2018, p.94). However, "as soon as children learn to reflect and negotiate their media-related demands and strive for greater autonomy in media use, parents need to develop different and more collaborative forms of parental mediation" (Naab, 2018, p.94),

such as evaluative mediation (e.g. holding open discussions regarding issues related to internet use and evaluation of content [Mesch, 2009]), participatory learning (e.g. inviting young children to guide parents into experiences with new media, listening to them and co-creating content with them [Clark, 2011]), enabling mediation (e.g. using technical control and monitoring [Livingstone et al., 2017]), and discursive mediation (e.g. having dialogues with children that enable them to share perspectives on various aspects of new media – video games in particular [Jiow, Lim & Lin, 2017]).

Despite the rapid evolution of the new media landscape, scholars have continued to investigate new and updated mediation strategies that are being employed by today's parents. By attempting to theorise some general guidelines regarding parental mediation, they not only help identify parents' styles and strategies in mediating children's new media use but also to examine factors influencing the way parents employ their mediation practices. Evidently, parents' socioeconomic status, especially their level of education, has been found to be a primary factor impacting parent-child interactions and parents' involvement in their children's use of new media (Festl & Gniewosz, 2019; Gentile et al., 2012; Nathanson, 2015; Livingstone et al., 2015; Lee, 2013). The existing literature demonstrates that families of lower socioeconomic status tend to have different parenting styles from families of higher status, and socioeconomic status can also affect perceptions of media, media habits and parental mediation strategies (Nathanson, 2015).

However, Nathanson (2015) suggests that "future research should not only investigate how media effects on children vary according to socioeconomic status, but also seek to understand why differences exist" (p.136). As such, it is essential to gain a better understanding of how parents perceive new media (Shin, 2015). Several studies have investigated this and its effects on children and found that parents with negative perceptions of new media tend to employ restrictive mediation, particularly rule-setting (Symons et al., 2019; Sonck, Nikken, & de Haan, 2013; Lim, 2013). Interestingly, parents are likely to employ time restrictions mostly among younger children to protect them from media overuse, due to parents' fears over its negative effects on study performance and health (e.g. poor eyesight, muscle pain, mental illness). In addition, parents with low confidence or self-efficacy of new media tended to employ more restrictive mediation, rather than active mediation or co-use.

3. Cultural background: Thai family values and beliefs

The differences in cultural and social contexts in which families exist play a role in constructing and guiding parental beliefs, which shape actual parenting (Bornstein & Cote, 2006). As suggested by Chao and Tseng (2002), different cultural backgrounds, as well as philosophical perspectives on childhood, result in differing childrearing concepts (Chao & Tseng, 2002). Consequently, parenting values and practices, as well as parent-child interactions, may vary among cultures (Bornstein & Cote, 2006). This emphasises the importance of understanding Thai culture and Thai parenting beliefs and values in order to better understand family communication and parent-child interactions in this context.

In Thailand, traditional values emphasise the importance of parent-child ties, deference to authority, and family values. Cross-cultural research reveals that Asian parents, including Thai parents, place great importance on parental authority (Ho, 1996). Additionally, as researchers have demonstrated, Asian parents have strong expectations regarding their children's family obligations (Fuligni, Tseng, & Chan, 1999, as cited in Chao & Tseng, 2002). Within most Asian cultures, families are considered to be group-oriented, which highlights interdependence as a priority in childrearing. As such, children are taught to see the family as the focal reference group for interdependence (Ho, 1996).

As most Asian countries are considered to have collectivistic cultural values, they emphasise interdependent relationships and prioritise the in-group's goals over personal ones (Chao & Tseng, 2002; Darwish & Huber, 2003). In contrast, in European and American societies, with less collectivistic cultures and greater individualism, there is more emphasis on personal goals and less emphasis on interdependence among family members (Chao & Tseng, 2002). According to Cote and Bornstein (2003), individualism and collectivism are beneficial constructs for understanding cultural variations in people's beliefs and practices (as cited in He, 2004). These concepts are useful for understanding parents' and children's beliefs, which influence parenting practices and parent-child negotiations.

The literature demonstrates that traditional Asian families are likely to be culturally collectivistic, emphasising interdependence, emotional self-control, and conformity. These cultural values, specifically a strong sense of obligation to the family and respect for and obedience to parents, have been found to be embedded in Asian family values (Choi et al., 2014). Similar to several other Asian countries, Thailand is categorised by Hofstede's analysis of cultural dimensions as a collectivistic society (Hofstede, 1984). In terms of family, Thailand fosters strong relationships among family members. This is demonstrated by a close, long-term

commitment to the member group, where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members (Pimpa, 2012). However, it has also been argued that Thai culture is individualistic, as Thai people prefer freedom and independence. Some have suggested that the individualistic nature of Thai people, in some cases, leads to self-centredness (Keston, 1988; Tiranasar, 2004). Although there appear to be some contradictions in these concepts in the context of Thailand, it can be said that individualism and collectivism are multifaceted dimensions that may coexist within a given culture (He, 2004, p.9). According to the examination of 50 existing cultural studies, Oyserman, Coon and Kemmelmeier (2002) suggest that individualism and collectivism are statistically independent in nature. Therefore, they cannot be considered as opposing constructs (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002). This accords with the caution issued by Harwood et al. (2001) regarding the suggestion that cultures are monotheistic, homogenous entities devoid of individual variation. As such, the opposite constructs may be useful in describing differences and similarities among family member groups as well as providing a meaningful way to tie parenting beliefs and practices to a larger cultural context (He, 2004, p.9).

Various studies have explored the values and beliefs of Asian families, and they have demonstrated that despite some differences in the sociocultural roots of family interdependence across Asian societies, commonalities in parenting can be found in the particular roles through which authority and responsibility are conferred among family members (Yee, 1998). According to the study of Asian parenting by Chao and Tseng (2002), parents in Asian families hold considerable authority and are treated with great respect by their children. Concurring with Yee's study (1998), they found that family roles in most Asian societies are structured largely by age. Asian children are socialised to respect their parents and follow their guidance. The Asian philosophical perspective on childhood may have an influence on this notion, especially the view of children as "white paper", which corresponds to John Locke's "blank slate" (tabula rasa) theory. This concept views children as innocents, akin to a piece of white paper that is available for anything to be written on. Boocock (1996) indicates that this notion reflects Buddhist influence on Asian parenting. Children are regarded as naturally good, unless tainted by their environments, which reflects the Buddhist belief that children can only be corrupted by the adult world, not by their own nature (Chao & Tseng, 2002, p.61).

In the Thai context, this value can be seen as a form of hierarchy. Traditional Thai society is considered to be a hierarchical culture (Pinyuchon & Gray, 1997). It is assumed that

young people need to learn appropriate behaviour concerning the hierarchy, so they are taught to recognise the difference between "high place" and "low place", apparent in the phrase "tee tam-tee soong", which implies the concept of "being mindful of one's place or being aware of one's social standing". Thus, children are taught to pay respect to their parents and elders (Elliot & Gray, 2000). Parents are, in a sense, perceived as the "house gods", who have provided life to the child, and therefore children are expected to obey and respect their parents (Charoenthaweesub & Hale, 2011). This concept is also related to Buddhist teaching: the philosophy of karma teaches that a good person has to treat his/her parents well (Pinyuchon & Gray, 1997). Podhisita (1998) also suggests that Buddhism is closely associated with Thai traditional values and cultural activities. Although the freedom to practice the religion of one's choice is guaranteed by the constitution of Thailand, Buddhism still remains the national religion (Plamintr, 2014). According to statistics published by the Pew Research Center (2012) and the World Factbook (2015), Thailand has the highest proportion of Buddhists in the world: there are 64,420,000 Buddhists in Thailand, which is around 93.6% of the Thai population (The Global Religious Landscape, 2015). Buddhism is not only the dominant religion, but it also dictates the outlook, the moral philosophy, and the way of life in Thai society (Rooij, 2015; Esposito, 2016).

Elliot and Gray (2000) point out that Buddhist Thais generally believe in the concept of repayment for their parents' good deeds (Elliot & Gray, 2000). This value is deeply rooted in Buddhist belief and absorbed by Thai people, as seen in the use of the phrase "bun khun" (Podhisita, 1998), implying the Thai social value of feeling gratitude or thankfulness towards specific individuals. As proposed by Mulder (1994), Thai relationships tend to be built on personal motivations, based on "bun-kun" and obligation. This is based on the need for affiliation and security (Pimpa, 2012, p.5). "Bun khun" can also be described as a feeling or an attitude of "gratitude" in acknowledgment of a benefit, help or favour, or any good thing that one has received from someone else. In return, it becomes an obligation on the part of the beneficiary. In terms of the Thai family context, what parents do for their children is perceived as "bun khun" that children have to repay with gratitude in different ways, such as taking care of their parents when they grow old (Tiranasar, 2004).

As stated earlier, the key characteristic of Asian parenting is the strong emphasis on interdependence among family members, which has important implications for what is responded to, emphasised, and sanctioned in the socialisation process. Parents are also expected to be involved extensively in caring for their children and making decisions for them

throughout their lives (Chao & Tseng, 2008). Children, in turn, are expected to consult with their parents and other family members on important decisions. Moreover, according to Knodel et al.'s (1995) study on family support for elderly Thais, Thai children typically provide financial support through regular remittances to their elderly parents. This is considered reciprocity – repaying parents for their sacrifices and care (Chao, & Tseng, 2002, p.68).

Thai parents expect each of their children to be a "good child", not unruly, and an attentive student and to have a good career (Nanthamongkolchai et al., 2002). It is common practice for Thai parents to save their earnings to support their children's education. They are expected to focus on their studies, and academic activities are more highly valued than recreational ones. Although Thai children and young people perform recreational activities with their friends after school and during weekends, such as seeing movies or visiting shopping malls, activities related to school or academic activities outside home are common, such as tutoring at cram schools. Generally, Thai parents believe that teaching and educating their children is the teacher's responsibility. They mainly teach their children individual and social responsibilities (Nanthamongkolchai et al., 2002). These social values and expectations may result in parental concerns over the time children spend on both online and offline activities. As such, they may influence parenting practices and types of parental mediation, particularly attempts to control children's use of new media and time limits on online activities.

4. Social changes and parents' socialisation in Thai families

Thai society has been transformed in the past 50 years by rapid economic development. Capitalism and the shift from an agricultural to an industrial economy has caused changes to the Thai family structure. Families are getting smaller as fertility rates decline. The downgrading of family sizes began in the 1980s and has continued over the last three decades. Accordingly, ethnographic studies consistently find a mix of nuclear and extended households in Thai society (Podhisita, 1985). Studies have found that extended families are declining, while nuclear families are rising in numbers and becoming the dominant family type in Thailand, particularly in urban societies (Sridawruang, 2011). The main household structure in Thailand nowadays is a nuclear family composed of two generations of family members – parents and unmarried children. According to Charoenthaweesub and Hale's study (2011, p.843), it is still common for Thai children to remain in their parents' home until they marry. However, it is becoming more common to find only two generations under the same roof, rather than three or more. The statistics demonstrate that the rates of extended family,

which consists of at least three generations of family members, are not too dissimilar to the nuclear family type, especially in the northeastern part of Thailand (NSO, 2018). However, new types of family units have been found in the Thai society, namely single-parent families, families with elders and children, and non-relative families (Podhisita 2012).

In addition to the change in family sizes, family structures have also been transformed in other ways, including delayed marriages and childbearing, increased divorce rates, and single parenthood. Existing data clearly suggest trends towards late marriage and an increasing proportion of celibacy among Thai men and women, while divorce rates have risen steadily over the past decades (Podhisita, 2012). According to the Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development (2014), the new generation of Thai people prioritise longer durations of formal education and spending more time working and earning money than in the past. Gender roles are also changing as a result of social change and modernity. Higher education is the main reason behind the increase in female autonomy and delayed marriages among the middle class, particularly in urban areas (Keyes, 1987; Cherlin & Chanratrithirong, 1988; Limanonda, 1989; Tominaga, 1987 – as cited in Ritcher & Podhisita, 1992).

In Thai traditional society, men hold authority over women and are considered heads of their households (Sridaowruang, 2011; Tominaga, 1987; Thai Health, 2012). The father is traditionally regarded as the family leader, while the mother plays a significant role in household activities, particularly in the kitchen, and in instructing children. However, a recent survey found that the number of female heads of households has grown annually. This reflects the fact that patriarchal attitudes are changing. Women are more emancipated and are also increasingly entering the paid labour market (Tominaga 1987; Kelly et al, 2010; Thai Health, 2012). As dual-earner families rise in numbers, there is a growing awareness of the problems of employed parents, especially mothers, in balancing work and family life. Although women have become more integrated into the labour force, their primary obligation is expected to be towards the family, including domestic work and child rearing (Jiumpanyarac, 2011; Ritcher et al.,1992). Importantly, the necessity of parents working outside the home in order to earn income can be a major cause of parents and children spending less quality time together. In some cases, the increasing distance between parents and children might result in child neglect or isolation (Polansky et al., 1985).

As both fathers and mothers appear to have equal responsibilities and duties, it is interesting to explore the time they are spending with their children, specifically regarding socialisation and their mediation of children's new media use. Understanding social changes

and their effects on family structure, parental roles, and relationships within families is essential if we are to understand changes in child socialisation, intra-family communication, and parental mediation.

5. Parents' perceived benefits and concerns over children's new media use at home

One of the major motivations of Thai parents for having new media devices within their homes is the expectation that children would use new media to gain knowledge and information. This expectation results from the high valorisation of academic achievement in the Thai cultural context, which appears to be a strong influence for parents to encourage children to take responsibility for their studying, as presented in the earlier section. As such, new media is perceived as a means to support children to enhance their academic performance. However, children and young people use new media in more diverse ways (e.g. viewing entertainment content online, contacting peers, and expanding social network circles) than simply for educational purposes: entertainment (e.g. watching movies and listening to music) and communication purposes (e.g. social media and chatting with peers) more than for educational purposes. The key issues associated with parents' perception on children's use of new media at home and parental mediation which need to be addressed are as follows:

5.1 Excessive use of new media

Spending time online is an integral part of most children and young people's daily lives. It is worth noting here that the impact of excessive time spent online by children has become a critical issue not only in Thai society but also at the international level. Consequently, children's overuse of new media and Internet addiction has become one of the major parental concerns which has a link to parents limiting the time children spend using new media. According to Wanajak (2011), children's overuse of new media was found to displace other important or positive activities (e.g. homework, housework, sleeping, exercise, socialising and family activities) and was identified as an influencing factor for internet addiction. He also suggests that the time of the day and the day of the week when children used the internet have been found to be important factors that influence the development of internet addiction. Previous studies (e.g. McDool et al., 2016; O'Kaffee & Clarke-Pearson, 2011; Viner et al., 2019; Wanajak, 2011) have proven that the excessive use of new media leads to negative effects and numerous problems for children and young people, such as poor academic performance, reduced attention during classroom lessons, relationship conflicts, physical issues (e.g. eye strain, back pain, headache, fatigue and obesity), and mental health

issues (e.g. social isolation, low self-esteem and depression). Additionally, a previous study (see McDool et al., 2016) conducted on social media and children's well-being reports that spending more time on social networks reduces the satisfaction that children feel with all aspects of their lives, except for their friendships. Therefore, it has been suggested by scholars and paediatricians that families should negotiate time limits for children's new media use based on the need of each individual child (Haddon, 2014; Viner et al., 2019; Wanajak, 2011).

5.2 Exposure to online risks and harms

Apart from parental concerns about children's excessive use of new media, children's use of various online platforms can be a channel for children to access and be exposed to dangers (e.g. websites, online games, and social media). As new media is also perceived as a defacto 'companion' for children and young people, and because teenagers commonly use new media for pleasure and entertainment (e.g. watching movies and listening to music) and communicating with their peers, some forms of online access can be considered a threat to children's safety. This in turn instils fear in parents, most worryingly perhaps communicating with strangers that could lead to unexpected dangers for children (e.g. they might come into contact with paedophiles and predators and/or become victims of online grooming).

Children's use of various online platforms also leads to parental concern over children's access to inappropriate content, especially pornography/adult content and violent content. There are likely to be potential risks of exposure to inappropriate content when children and young people use new media through different online platforms, for example, YouTube and Google Search, which are perceived by children and young people as useful channels for gaining knowledge and information as well as during leisure time. The existing literature clearly suggests that there are possibilities for children to encounter adult materials or inappropriate content through unintentional searches or commercial advertisements and online downloading of files (e.g. Livingstone & Bober, 2004, 2005; Livingstone & Haddon, 2009; Nansen et al., 2011). This suggests that parents need to employ a variety of mediation strategies to minimise the adverse effects of new media on children.

It can be said that parents recognise both the benefits and potential risks or harm from new media. While its advantages encourage children's use of new media in a variety of positive ways, in contrast, its disadvantages lead to parental concerns and the implementation of different strategies to mitigate the potential negative effects on their children. This highlights the importance of parental mediation of children's online activities to protect them from exposure to such harm. Parental monitoring and supervision are still required to some extent

because it contributes to the protection of children's online privacy and safety by reducing risky online behaviours (Chisholm, 2006; Young, 2009).

5.3 The popularity of mobile phone use

Teenagers' preference for mobile phones over other devices results from their consideration of privacy, as mobile phones are more personal and typically owned individually. Previous studies (e.g. Campbell, 2005; Livingstone, 2005; Haddon, 2013) confirm the popularity of mobile phones and indicate that they have caused changing dynamics in families due to issues of safety and parental surveillance. This leads to an expanded discussion on negotiation between parents and children, especially teenagers, over children's freedoms and parental control (Campbell, 2005, p.2).

In the existing literature on children and new media (e.g. Bovill & Livingstone, 2011; Haddon, 2004, 2011, 2014; Livingstone et al., 2004; O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011), there are discussions on parent–child interaction and power relations within the family context. It has been seen that the portable characteristics of mobile phones pose challenges for parents who wish to monitor their children's use in a private setting. It is clearly shown that mobile phone use provides more privacy for children and young people, which raises more concerns about what they can access beyond parental control and supervision and who they may encounter online (Livingstone & Haddon, 2009). This generates crucial questions for parents regarding the risks they need to be aware of and how they should mediate their children's use of such portable devices.

However, it is interesting to note that parents may also use new media technologies to help their childrearing, as a tool for socialisation. Parent-child communications via mobile phones can be a way to link the family and strengthen family relationships. Moreover, mobile phones can be used to track the behaviour and whereabouts of the children under their care and to monitor them, especially teenagers (Ling & Donner, 2009).

6. Parental mediation strategies within the Thai cultural context

As presented in Section 2.2, there are various strategies that parents employ in order to deal with their children's new media use. This section will provide an account of parental mediation strategies based on Thai cultural background, social values and intra-family communication styles, which leads to deeper understanding of how parents optimise their children's use of new media at home in the Thai family context.

When discussing about Thai parents and Thai culture, it seems that restrictive mediation is often used among different types of parental mediation due to their concerns over children's overuse of new media which leads to negative outcomes (e.g. their poor academic performances and health issues). This also relates to the cultural context, namely that Thai families follow a hierarchical structure. Recent studies of Thai family communication found that hierarchy still plays a vital role in Thai families in which parents attempt to maintain their power and communication. Children are taught to respect parents and elders from a very early age (Sridaowruang, 2011, p.4). They are taught that parents are never wrong and they should unquestioningly believe what they are told. As such, communication between parents and children tends to be one way and top down, from the parent to the child. Any sort of talking back or counter argument is considered disrespectful (Detzner et al., 2010). Consequently, restrictive mediation is popularly employed by Thai parents.

It should also be noted that time restrictions constitute a simple and to some degree effective way of protecting children from certain negative effects, especially those related to their health and their allocation of time to other activities such as schoolwork. In terms of content restrictions, parents tend to prevent their children's exposure to undesirable online content (e.g. violence and pornography) by actively screening content than by using filtering software. This is in part because parents are unaware of technical options available to them, but some parents are clearly aware of the options but choose not to employ them. This suggests that they may not be convinced of the efficacy of such measures. A discussion on the issue of levels of confidence in using new media and the digital knowledge gap, which limits the extent to which parents can negotiate their children's new media use, will be discussed in Section 8.

Discussing further about family communication and Thai children's disciplined behaviours, Thai parents use both negative and positive communication methods to discipline their children. Some examples of negative methods are yelling, reproaching them for a mistake or misconduct, and levying a range of punishments (Pinyuchon & Gray, 1997). Moreover, parents sometimes use intrusive monitoring strategies, including checking search histories, reading children's text messages and asking children directly what they do online. One use of this kind of strategy can be called emotional monitoring, i.e. the inspection of children's social media profiles in order to judge their mood and to learn of any emotional issues they may be going through. Monitoring strategies were sometimes carried out openly and sometimes secretly, but in either case there may be emotional consequences, especially in terms of

children feeling a loss of privacy or a decrease in trust between family members. However, parents, especially mothers, also employed supervising strategies in which they guided or provided instructions to their children while they were online. This strategy seems to be effective; however, it is time consuming.

Nevertheless, based on the literature on intra-family communication, family members often communicate and advise each other in Thai households. When any member gets into a difficult situation, the rest will try to help them solve the problem. This results from the social value that Thai parents always perceive their children to be young and vulnerable forever, no matter their age (Ktiyotaivongs, 2004; Charoenthaweesub & Hale, 2011; Kelly et al., 2010). Interestingly, the use of positive oral communication methods is also popular among Thai parents in the contemporary age, such as teaching the value and importance of disciplined behaviours and explaining its values and consequences (Sridawruang, 2011). In terms of the expression of thoughts and sharing of opinions, in some families, children are allowed to participate in family discussions (Charoenthaweesub & Hale, 2011). However, Thai children are taught to express their opinions respectfully, especially to parents and other adults. It is not easy for them to express themselves openly and directly in family decision-making, especially when they disagree. This is because of the hierarchy between children and older people, and the emphasis on social harmony among Thais (Pinyuchon & Gray, 1997). Consequently, among different types of parental mediation, "talking with children" is considered a (pro)active method for safeguarding children from online dangers. This strategy appears to be beneficial in keeping parents informed about their children's activities, opinions, knowledge, and level of maturity. It also provides agency for the child, allowing them to participate in dialogue and express their ideas regarding new media issues. This especially applies to teenagers who actively seek autonomy and independence.

It is essential to note that a child's age is an influential factor for parents implementing mediation strategies, with younger children's use of new media tending to be more restricted than among older children and young people. This is mainly because children belonging to the younger age group are considered by parents to need more intensive care and monitoring, whereas older children and young people need more autonomy and privacy (Haddon, 2013; Livingstone, 2014). Parents' awareness of the different requirements of children of different ages is helpful for their effective implementation of mediation strategies. Since many teenagers tend to be more confident in their new media skills, they usually demand a higher degree of autonomy for their online activities. Hence, they would rather be engaged in discussion and

negotiation than be monitored or restricted. While most children appeared to understand their parent's desire to protect them from risks or harm, some of them may feel that they experience a loss of privacy when their parents closely monitor their devices or online activities.

Nevertheless, there are various important factors that influence parental decisions to use different types of mediation -- concerns about new media use, parents' self-efficacy in using new media, their time availability, children's ages and characteristics, and consideration regarding children's psychological development, need for privacy and autonomy. However, it is crucial to highlight the importance of both parents' and children's digital competence in reinforcing children's agency and autonomy in their use of new media. Moreover, it can serve as knowledge capital for parents to negotiate with children regarding their appropriate use of new media in a more effective way.

7. Digital competence and reverse socialisation

Currently, children and young people are growing up in an immensely changing global context as new media provides them with opportunities to be more visible and act as change agents, especially in their families. Many of them tend to possess advanced technological abilities and have a wider range of digital knowledge and skills in the use of new media than their parents (see Jones-Kavalier & Flannigan, 2006; Gui & Argentin, 2011). This includes an ability not only to express themselves and develop their ideas through new media but to use the media purposefully to create, organise, store, and retrieve digital content. What needs to be considered is an association between digital competence and parent-child negotiation over children's new media use. The digital generation gap between parents and their children weakens parents' roles in their children's socialisation in the digital arena, particularly in the case of teenagers. This results in children's attempts to negotiate greater autonomy to use new media.

It is important to note that parents' digital competence is identified as a significant determinant of parental mediation and reverse socialisation. Thus, new media/digital competence is required by parents to conduct more effective parental mediation. This is associated with the concept of self-efficacy (Bandura & Schunk, 1981), which refers to a person's belief in one's capabilities to learn or perform behaviours, as confidence influences motivation, learning and achievement (Meral et al., 2012; Shoemaker, 2010). Consequently, parents with lower levels of digital confidence and stronger concerns about the dangers of

new media tend to apply restrictive mediation of their children's new media use. On the contrary, parents who are highly confident about their digital proficiency tend to be more motivated to actively engage with their children regarding the use of new media, and they do so practically and interactively. Existing evidence found that parents with high digital skills tend to be more strongly engaged in their children's new media use (Festl & Gniewosz, 2019). This emphasises the importance of parents' skills and knowledge of new media, as suggested by Festl and Gniewosz (2019): "benefits of the internet were rather a matter of parental confidence, which need to be strengthened across families, notwithstanding their educational background" (p.17). However, Symons et al. (2017) suggest that, "parental mediation is best conceived as a dynamic process that stems from the daily interactions between parents and their children, rather than as a preconceived set of rules and strategies that are implemented" (p.1). In addition, Zaman et.al. (2016) stress the importance of accounting for contextual and social practices in the investigation of how new media is being appropriated in families, and how parents and children ascribe meaning to it.

It is not sufficient that children are equipped with new media devices; more importantly, skills and knowledge are required for them to navigate the digital world safely. However, it may be commonly assumed that children who engage in a diverse repertoire of online activities are also more digitally skilled and, therefore, might need less parental engagement for their safe use of new media. This notion needs to be reinterpreted carefully in a broader sense. Children and young people may be perceived as "digital natives" (Prensky, 2001, p.1) who are more competent in using new media than their parents and may have become "technology brokers" who mediate between their parents and use of digital media (Correa, 2013, p.105). This may result in a shift in child-parent socialisation, which occurs within the Thai family context where parents play the role of co-user in an online world instead of knowledge provider/transmitter.

In dealing with children's new media use in the digital age, the top-down approach to socialisation appears to be shifting to a bottom-up or bi-directional approach. However, it needs to be cautioned that being digitally skilled is not same as having the skills or insights to avoid online dangers. Many children know how to use new media as they are familiar with the devices in terms of technical skills. Most importantly, parents still need to play their role in helping to equip them with critical thinking skills. This relates to encouraging and supporting them to have more literacy in using new media as it can provide them with essential critical skills to evaluate which online resources are beneficial or dangerous when exposed to any

unexpected circumstances online. They will be able to evaluate potential danger and decide how to deal with such issues more appropriately if they possess critical thinking skills or so-called new media literacy skills.

The implication of this paper is that proactive communication is suggested as an effective mediation approach for supporting children and young people to gain more extensive benefits from the online world. It would allow parents to empower children's agency in the use of new media and, in turn, encourage them to have more interaction with their children. The engagement of children in this type of mediation can also lead to the refinement of the parental mediation theory as it demonstrates the shift of children's role to "new media broker" – children assisting in teaching parents and encouraging instructive discussions on new media use. This strategy can encourage children's awareness of potential risks and harms online and enhance their resilience if they encounter these. Listening to children by employing a proactive approach is crucial, as being heard is their right under Article 12 of the UNCRC (Livingstone, 2019). In addition, when children feel that parents listen to them, it motivates them to reveal more without fear of parental judgment (Livingstone, 2002). Accordingly, it can be a means to promote enhancement of the parent-child relationship. Livingstone (2019) suggests the following:

Children have plenty to say about the upsides and downsides of the internet, and about what should be done. They call for internet access, digital literacy and greater support, recognising the huge breadth of ways in which the digital world is reconfiguring their wellbeing and life changes (Livingstone, 2019). Being acquainted with the details of what children are doing online, what they are facing, whom they encounter, and what they are thinking about their online experiences will make it easier for parents to safeguard their children from online harm. However, it is worth considering that it could also potentially lead to conflict if children resist this kind of mediation. Furthermore, it is recommended that more effective support systems are needed in Thailand to educate, advocate, and guide parents in building their digital skills and knowledge so that they can develop their self-efficacy in using new media and enhance the effectiveness of their mediation strategies in ways that keep children safe while enabling them to gain maximal benefits from the opportunities presented by new media technologies.

8. Conclusion

The nature of children's media use nowadays appears to be complex due to the characteristics of new media and the digital environment, which allow children to develop greater autonomy in new media use. Consequently, it becomes more difficult for parents to implement their parental mediation when children's access is not limited to traditional media alone. However, many parents tend to focus on safeguarding their children from online risks and harm because keeping children safe is the central part of the parental role. There are dangers that children may encounter as a result of their new media use, and parents, as well as all governments/states, have a duty to protect children from negative effects. However, this paper has raised a question about the focus of parents in terms of balancing between minimising negative effects of children's use of new media and minimising its positive capacities.

The paper stresses the importance of considering the shift of the parental role from being a provider of safety to becoming a supporter who empowers children's agency through their new media use. The outcome of this work also focuses on guidelines for parents to potentially enhance children's well-being. Essentially, both parents and children are encouraged to develop their new media competence and literacy to gain better benefits from their use of new media within the family context. Overall, this paper calls for the understanding that new media/digital competence is required for parents to conduct more effective mediation. Thus, parents who are highly confident about their digital proficiency tend to be more actively engaged with their children regarding their new media use, and they do so practically and interactively. Therefore, parents who upgrade their competence and self-efficacy in using new media are likely to be better able to maximise the benefits their children can gain from new media.

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