

# Parents' Narratives on the Online Content Risks among Filipino Children

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**ABSTRACT.** It is prevalent that the internet has become a part of a child's life. However, this accessibility comes with risks that start at the age of 8. Hence, this Narratology explored the experiences of these Filipino children with online content risks as told by their parents. The deductive method was used to analyze the data using the Personal Experience Narrative (PEN) and the 4Cs: Classifying Online Risks Among Children as frameworks for the story structure. Based on the study's findings, all online content risks are observable, which usually happens at home. Aggressive content risks are common to all and interconnect with other risks. Parental supervision was also emphasized as a critical factor affecting these children's exposure. The findings of this study could be a basis for developing Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials and other related future research.

## 1.0. Introduction

Children age 6 to 12 utilize the Internet as a source of information, communication, and entertainment, a vital stage for social and emotional development (McDool et al., 2020). Despite these advancements, children are vulnerable to some risks. Livingstone and Stoilova (2021) introduced a framework that classifies online risks among children: content, contact, conduct, and contract. Content risks are those when a child is exposed to potentially harmful content; contact risks are when a child experiences or is targeted by contact with potentially detrimental adult-initiated interaction; conduct risks when a child witnesses, participates or is a victim of potentially detrimental activities, and contract risks are when a child is subjected to potentially harmful contract or commercial aims. These risk classifications are further divided into subclass: commercial, aggressive, sexual, and values. Commercial content risks involve adverts, spam, and so-called "free – content" that aims to get someone's personal information; aggressive content risks are those graphically violent or hateful and misused images in nature; sexual risks are pornographic or sexual content; values content risks are those prejudices linked to race, disability, sexual orientation, and any misleading information or advice and manipulation.

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) gathered and compared

the data on 15,000 children who used the internet and were exposed to various online risks in some selected countries across Europe, Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America. In South Africa, more than half of these children admitted that they were exposed to online sexual content. 22% of the respondents in Italy and Uruguay were exposed to hate speech content. Between 30% and 75% of these children disclosed that they could not verify the truthfulness of the information they obtained online.

In the Philippines, Filipino children start having online access at 9 (UNICEF, 2020). However, Royandoyan (2022) reported cases of online risk exposure among Filipino children, beginning at the age of 8. Statistics in 2020 revealed that 19% of Filipino children have communicated online with people they have never seen in person, while 33% of Filipino children admitted to seeing sexual images online, and 20% said their peers had hurtfully treated them. Due to this accessibility, Filipino children are exposed to risks associated with internet content (UNICEF, 2020).

These cases posed a considerable challenge to parents as facilitators at home. Parents play an essential role in supporting their children to engage in online activities and reducing their risk exposure (UNICEF, 2020). It is the responsibility of the parents to participate and protect the online well-being of children. Bronfenbrenner's (2005) Bioecological Systems Theory reflects that parents and their children have "bi-directional influences" – a relationship between a parent and a child wherein

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beliefs and behaviors are interconnected in a way that changes according to their interactions. Though present in other variables that revolve around a child, the relationship between a parent and a child is the strongest. It has the most significant impact.

The most significant relationship that affects a child's growth and development is between a parent and child (Lasco et al., 2022). For example, the advancement of self-help skills among young children can be attributed to the encouragement and motivation of their parents (Sobrebiga & Medez, 2020). The parents' narratives are valuable in revealing their children's experiences. This approach is observable in the works of Corey et al. (2021) and Lasco et al. (2022), where the parents' narratives were used to explore their children's experiences.

Unfortunately, Filipino children lack the skills and knowledge to handle typical online risks and threats (Royandoyan, 2022). Moreover, related literature that discusses the effects of these risks on the behavior of Asian children is also limited (UNICEF, 2020). This implies that with the limited studies available, online dangers for children are scarcely explored. Thus, there is a need to fully navigate this compelling issue to ensure children's safety, especially during this Fourth Industrial Revolution. In light of the pressing problems of online risks and threats among children, it is timely and relevant to conduct research that will explore the experiences of these children as told by their parents.

## 2.0. Methodology

*Research Design.* I used Narratology for this qualitative study. This approach aims to create a story about the participants' lives (Hays & Wood, 2011) and seeks to define what constitutes a narrative (Fludernik & Pirlet, 2012). Such an approach is needed to unveil the narratives of the participants. Take, for example, the studies of Van der Spuy and Jayakrishnan (2021) on the narrative analysis of COVID-19 stories and Esparar et al. (2022) on teachers' narratives as learning facilitators in the new normal. Both studies used Narratology to gather and present the accounts of the participants.

*Participants.* The ten participating parents were identified using snowball sampling in selected areas in Negros Occidental. Simkus (2023) described this sampling technique as asking participants to help find additional potential subjects. These participants identified other potential participants by observing the set criteria of selection. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), the number of participants could range from 10 to 50, depending on the type of research and research question. The sample size was limited to 10 participants due to the broad coverage of the study and the confidentiality of the information,

which affected the willingness of the participants to engage.

All participants have children aged 8 to 9 with access to a computer or an electronic gadget at home that connects to the internet. To maintain the anonymity of the participants, I used pseudonyms using the most common Filipino names among women in 2005 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2009). Participant 1 is Angelica, 2 is Nicole, 3 is Jasmine, 4 is Kimberly, 5 is Erica, 6 is Bea, 7 is Christine, 8 is Althea, 9 is Stephanie, and 10 is Michelle.

*Data Collection Procedure.* A clearance from the university was secured before the conduct of the study. I informed the participants of the study's purpose and surrounding circumstances and was allowed to discontinue. Furthermore, all identities were kept anonymous, and the participants were privileged to know the study results.

Due to the confidentiality of the narratives, I used the Individual Interview Form (IIF) as the participants delivered their stories through individual qualitative interviews. The IIF contained the question, "What are the online content risks being faced by your child?" with relevant questions based on Personal Experience Narratives (PEN) developed by Akinsanya and Bach (2014). The PEN will be categorized into six factors of narrative analysis (abstract, orientation, complicating action, resolution, evaluation, and coda). Due to the distance and limited time of the participants, a series of online interviews were conducted, which I recorded with their consent. A copy of the discussion was then given to the participants 48 hours later to ensure the correctness of the data. I conducted follow-up interviews with the participants to expand upon the PEN to ensure data saturation.

I observed the concept introduced by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to ensure the trustworthiness of the data gathered in the interview. Trustworthiness in evaluating qualitative research is a concept that involves the following: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. To ensure credibility, I conducted the member-checking approach. After the interview transcription, the participants will review the findings and preliminary analysis to assess whether they reflect their meaning and purpose. For dependability, I collaborated with a faculty member from the institution with research experience to assess the truthfulness of the preliminary findings. In terms of transferability, the 4Cs: Classifying Online Risk to Children (Livingstone & Stoilova, 2021) was the basis of understanding surrounding concepts of online risks. This framework is based on the full range of the child's rights in the digital environment established by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2020). To address confirmability, a concise

coding system indicates the codes and patterns found during the study. In this case, I utilized the PEN by Akinsanya and Bach (2014) as a framework for the story structure.

*Mode of Data Analysis.* I used the Deductive Method for Narrative Analysis. A deductive analysis (priors) usually involves employing the data to test a theory. It resembles a “top-down” data processing method (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2021). This approach uses a story structure framework as the initial set of codes (Delve et al., 2020). This framework gathered from existing theory was used as a springboard for the study. The Personal Experience Narrative (PEN) in narrative analysis by Akinsanya and Bach (2014) was used to structure the data gathered from the participants. The PEN has six factors: abstract, orientation, complicating action, resolution, evaluation, and coda.

The *abstract* summarizes the whole narrative and consists of one or two clauses at the start. This gives an overview of what it is all about. The *orientation* provides information about the time, place, character, activity, or situation that will follow. By including this element, readers will have a background of the persons involved in the narrative. The *complicating actions* were clauses that informed the audience about what happened. These clauses include the specific details of the narrative’s content. The *resolution* focuses on how the complicated action was resolved. This effectively sums up the whole narrative. The *evaluation* forms the narrative’s affective side and explains the story’s worthiness to be shared. This also includes the evaluation of the narrator on how he/she felt during the time of the actual timeframe of the narrative. The *coda* consists of an epiphany or knowledge that alters the participants’ perceptions of the world or their understanding of it. This element answers the “lesson learned” and how the experience affects the present time.

Through this analysis, I evaluated some narratives that revealed valuable insights shown and taught through these stories (Akinsanya & Bach, 2014). Moreover, the 4Cs: Classifying Online Risk to Children by Livingstone and Stoilova (2021) was used to classify these themes, focusing on the content risks. The PEN and the 4Cs are used as the framework’s theoretical basis. Various related literature was also used to support the insights of the researcher.

### 3.0. Results

The individual qualitative interview revealed the PEN of these parents on the online content risks among their children. These narratives are meaningfully arranged to create a story using themes based on the PEN (abstract, orientation, complicating action, resolution, evaluation, and coda).

**The Risks Are There (Abstract).** During the interview, the participants revealed their personal experiences as their children have accessed the internet and been exposed to online content risks. I found out that these contents are interconnected with other risks. Below are the accounts of the participants:

“YouTube *contents bala*, like it is too violent for them to watch and...” (Youtube content, like it is too violent for them to watch and...) (Christine, personal, communication, February 8, 2023)

“Ang video clips *bala sir nga gagamit sila armas, inang may tiruhay.*” (Those video clips, sir, that use firearms, those with shooting scenes.) (Nicole, personal, communication, January 3, 2023)

“May mga kanta na sya nga may ‘fuck you’” (Some songs have “fuck you”) (Althea, personal, communication, January 20, 2023)

“... about sex na daw lain na bala haw ... or ano sa mga dirty dancing, mga amo na eh...” (...about sex ... or those dirty dancing, those such things...) (Stephanie, personal, communication, February 9, 2023)

“Mga kiss-kiss sa mga cartoons, sir.” (Those cartoons that are kissing, sir.) (Kimberly, personal, communication, January 11, 2023)

“...may mga advertisement nga daw indi na ano sa edad niya daw something amo na gid ya nga mga content daw for adults...” (...some advertisements are not age-appropriate for my child, something like content that is only intended for adults.) (Michelle, personal, communication, February 13, 2023)

**Risk Exposure Happens at Home (Orientation).** Based on their narratives, their child’s exposure to the risks usually happens at home through their cellular phones and tablets. They typically have access to these contents in the presence of their mothers, siblings, peers, or alone.

“Maghapon na sa balay magpuli na siya after school, two hours per day... Mga cousin niya man nga 10 kag 7 years old... May kaugalingon sila nga cellphone.” (In the afternoon, at

home after class, two hours per day... with his cousins ages 10 and 7 years old. They have their cell phones.) (Angelica, personal, communication, January 3, 2023)

"...wala man sila ubrahon sa balay, ti amo na, cellphone, pero daw ka okay pa man to ya nga that time ya sang ano ya. . . Manghod nya man..." (...they have nothing to do at home, so he will have the cellphone, but it was fine at first before... with his younger sibling.) (Jasmine, personal, communication, February 1, 2023)

"Balay lang gid, may wifi mong. Ang iya man di classmate nga isa nga upod nya man sa balay." (It is only at home since we have WIFI. He is with his classmate who is staying with us.) (Bea, personal, communication, January 20, 2023)

"Kaya niya magaccess na sya isa..." (My child can access it by himself.) (Althea, personal, communication, January 20, 2023)

**You will Realize It When It is There (Complicating Action).** The parents' narratives revealed that the contents are usually shared and accessible through online video streaming and electronic games. The parents realize their child's exposure while the child is accessing or has just accessed these contents is standard on both platforms. The parents have expressed the following:

"Natingala ko nga gahimutad gid siya, grabi gid iya himutad nga amo na... Bali ginhungod ko gid tika kay syempre ginacheck ko man kon gina ano niya man sa cellphone niya mong. Syempre iloy ka, basi ano ginahimo sang bata mo." (I was curious why he was so focused on the screen. I peeked to check what he was doing on his phone. Of course, I am his mother, and I want to know what my child is doing.) (Kimberly, personal, communication, January 11, 2023)

"...ga games lang siya then suddenly may mga advertisement nga somewhat like actually ano man siya nang... Umm siguro mga drinks sang... amo na mga smoke not necessarily mga sexual indi man na daw indi ano sa... syempre bata daw amo na bala kis ah daw may mga... nga although indi man indi man niya pag himuon pero nga

daw ma wondered siya bala curiosity nga ti ngaah mama ngaah mama need nga mama may mga ngaah may mga moderate kuno pero ga inom dyapon something like that..." (...he was playing games when suddenly, there was this advertisement... uhm, maybe it is on about drinking... or smoking, not necessarily sexual... of course, children will not do it right away, but they will be curious... they would ask 'Mama, why? Mama, why is it needed? Mama, why would people still drink it moderately?' Something like that. . .) (Michelle, personal, communication, February 13, 2023)

Another indicator observed by the parents that showed complicated actions is the unusual and inappropriate behaviors that these children manifest. They also assume that these behaviors were adopted from the exposure since they have seen the online content.

"Ga-lag iya cellphone haw, maghampang siya, ti, ang ML (Mobile Legends) na bala haw, maperdi siya guro (gesturing to smack the phone)." (The cellphone suddenly lags while playing ML (Mobile Legends); maybe he loses the game (gestures to smack the phone).) (Angelica, personal, communication, January 3, 2023)

"May mga online games na sya nga gaestoryahanay nagmumura ng 'putang ina nyo!'"... Kon sila na lang maglalaro, ginamanifest nila sa ila free time." (There are online games where they communicate and curse, "motherfucker!"... Moreover, when they play alone in their free time, it is usually manifested.) (Althea, personal, communication, January 20, 2023)

**Parental Measures (Resolution).** Based on their PEN, participants reprimanded their children verbally to control the risk exposure. The narratives are presented below:

"Ginasaway ko siya, sir. Ti mastop man lang siya. Pero next day, ara ma dyapon." (I reprimand him, sir. Then, he will stop. But the next day, he will do it again) (Angelica, personal, communication, January 3, 2023)

"Gina-akigan gid, nga indi na dapat mag-amo na." (I scolded him, saying that he should not be doing that.) (Bea, personal, communication, January 20, 2023)

Some participants also extended their actions, including restricting the settings or device and introducing age-appropriate alternative applications to their children. Below are their verbal expressions:

“...ginhatag ko ang tablet sa magulang bata ko, sa magulang niya. Kay indi ko kabalo magrestrict mong.” (...I gave the tablet to his older sibling because I do not know how to use the restriction settings.) (Kimberly, personal, communication, January 11, 2023)

“Gabutang kami restrictions sa TV pero kis-a may ara sa Tiktok nga random lang man na siya mong... May restrictions sa settings, pero indi amo na siya accurate.” (We put restrictions on the TV, but there are random Tiktok videos. There are restrictions in the settings, but it could be more accurate.) (Erica, personal, communication, January 11, 2023)

“Daw gin gina change ko sya instead of YouTube may ara ‘to siya YouTube Kids na. gin transfer ko ‘to siya I don’t know if maka lusot indi ko sure...” (I changed it instead of YouTube; there is this YouTube Kids. I do not know if it will work; I am not sure.) (Christine, personal, communication, February 8, 2023)

**Significance of Parental Supervision (Evaluation).** Some parents have expressed their views on the incident during their child’s exposure to these online content risks. One of the realizations they have described is the importance of parental supervision as children explore the internet.

“Ang na realize ko nga dapat syempre ang bata mo time by time monitoron mo gid kung ano ginalantaw nila.” (I realized that you must monitor your child’s activity occasionally.) (Jasmine, personal, communication, February 1, 2023)

Supervision gid ya yapon sa kids despite the fact na umm they know how especially they know how to operate the gadgets the internet. They know how to navigate everything...” (It is supervision even though they know how to operate the gadgets. They know how to navigate everything on the internet.) (Christine, personal, communication, February 8, 2023)

“Parental control over their children.

Taga limit kon pila kaoras. Dapat ang ginikanan aware sang mga site nga ginawisit nila. Dapat paminsan minsan, sisilipin niyo.” (Parental control over their children. You have to limit the hours. Parents should be aware of the websites that they visit. From time to time, you have to check them.) (Althea, personal, communication, January 20, 2023)

**The Experience Hereafter (Coda).** Parents who were interviewed revealed mixed insights that they have learned based on their experiences. These insights are related to their parenting style and the recurrence of such risky incidents.

“Bad gid na siya ya kay basi bala sa iban nga place bala sir, message niya mahambal, kalain pamatian basi bala maano sa amon, “Hala ang ginikanan niya, indi kasaway!” (It is not good. My child may say it in public, and it will reflect on us being parents. “Oh, his parents cannot discipline their child!) (Angelica, personal, communication, January 3, 2023)

“... dapat ma pahinumduman lang bala permi sang ginikanan ang bata nga indi kamo na mag sunod sa amo na nga site or sa ano nang ka wild na indi pa na para sinyu.” (Parents should always remind their child not to follow those sites, it is too wild for their age.) (Stephanie, personal, communication, February 9, 2023)

On the other hand, a parent has expressed a positive outlook despite the incident. Despite the negative experience, she believes having her children at home brings her happiness and satisfaction.

“So far, happy man lang kay may mga kabataan man sa balay. Nami man kon magpuli ka, gakadula imo kapoy.” (So far, I am happy that some children are at home. It feels nice when you come home; your stress fades away.) (Bea, personal, communication, January 20, 2023)

#### 4.0. Discussion

Based on the PEN of the participants, all of the online content risks are observable. These types of risks rapidly change in a growing digital environment, sometimes exposing children to emerging risks before parents know how to minimize them (Livingstone & Stoilova, 2021). Children across the globe have most

of their internet access at home (Malamud et al., 2019). Though this access could stimulate learning for children, risks cannot be avoided. Despite the economic background of these children, similar home access cases are still observable (UNICEF, 2020).

There are indeed high risks associated with online games and video streaming platforms. Elsayed (2021) revealed that 64.7% of online gamers are males of young age. Such games attract boys due to their creative nature. In addition, Holland (2021) cited that out of 3,904 children surveyed under 13 years old, 80% play games online, and 61% of them have been contacted by a stranger who also plays with them in the same game. Boys (68%) were more likely to report these incidents than girls (56%).

In content with sexual themes, children aged 8 to 17 are being exposed to hyper-sexualization (Soriano-Ayala et al., 2022). Furthermore, some mediocre songs accompanied by erratic dance movements are circulating on social media platforms (Boettger & Quast, 2020). Though these “dance challenges” might look simple and child-friendly, there are content creators who create hypersexual posts (Hussain, 2022).

On the number of advertisements a child might get from an app, free apps have more distracting and persuasive apps (Meyer et al., 2019). For example, one parent reported an app showing a cartoon of a political figure trying not to push a red button as if it were about to explode. This implies that numerous ads could be present in an application and that, at first, they might look age-appropriate but have themes unsuitable for children.

Parents do not necessarily need to limit their children's access to the internet to protect them. The benefits and risks to children of using computers to access information through the internet depend on parental involvement, including monitoring their online interactions (Malamud et al., 2019). Most participants found verbal reprimand effective in minimizing the online content risks in their children. Verbal reprimands also increased child compliance (Leijten et al., 2018). However, the use of technology education among parents is minimal (Osorio-Saez et al., 2021). This could explain why only a few parents have explored the mechanisms of applications to minimize such risks.

## 5.0. Conclusion

The Narratology revealed valuable experiences of Filipino Children with online content risks as told by their parents. Using the deductive analysis based on PEN, these stories were arranged meaningfully in subcategories, emphasizing the worthiness of these experiences to be shared.

It was revealed that most children were exposed

to aggressive content interconnected with other risks that usually happen at home. To control this exposure, parents would reprimand their children verbally. With this, parents understand the importance of parental supervision since such risky exposure has affected their children's behavior.

Deductive analysis in this kind of study has been found effective. This might be due to existing frameworks, such as the PEN and 4Cs, that serve as the study's theoretical basis.

## 6.0. Limitations of the Findings

The study's findings are limited to online content risks as reflected in the 4Cs: Classifying Online Risk to Children. Moreover, the participants were taken in the cities in some selected areas in Negros Occidental. Due to the observance of minimum health protocols, which vary on the pandemic alerts set by the locality, online video conferences were utilized. Other factors on the end of the parents were not considered, such as gender, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status.

## 7.0. Practical Value

The findings of this research can be used as the basis for developing information, education, and communication materials that would spread awareness of online content risks among children.

## 8.0. Directions for Future Research

The narratives of these studies may serve as a springboard for other possible research, specifically on other online risks (contact, conduct, and contract). The factors revolving around parental involvement, such as awareness and practices to control these online risks, may also be focused on.

## 9.0. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

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