CONNECTION ACROSS THE CYBERSPACE: LIVED EXPERIENCES OF MOTHER AND CHILD SEPARATED BY SEAS AND TIDES

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Abstract

In these contemporary times, most of the mothers have the tendency to work even though they are going to leave their children alone in their house. Nowadays more mothers have entered the workforce. Although women are faced with new options related to careers, childrearing is still a life's goal for most. The researchers desired to surface the vibrant experiences of Filipino mothers who utilize the internet to communicate with their children from afar. Specifically, the researchers explained on the ways these mothers handled the situation of providing care and maintaining their relationship with their children. Capitalizing on the core principle of phenomenological approach, three (3) pre-identified mothers and their children from the National Capital Region were purposively chosen to serve as the corpus of data to give elucidation to the research inquiry. The richness of the information from the in-depth interview has made the researcher come up with one major theme entitled: Interconnected Relationship. Furthermore, through qualitative analysis, two subthemes emerged to discuss such event, namely: [1] Immediate Access, and [2] Feels Near, but so Far. Through critical friend technique, the researchers assimilated the themes and have come up with the simulacrum 'Modified Yin-Yang on a Web'. The results have mapped the effects of distant relationship and the role of Cyberspace in bridging this particular gap. It gives rise to the actuality that the role of cyberspace in bridging communication gaps can not be denied.

Keywords: Cyberspace, Internet, Mother and Child Relationship, Phenomenological

BACKGROUND

In a 2006 survey by the American Psychological Association, it is reported that most of the mothers have the tendency to work even though they are going to leave their children alone in their house. Nowadays more mothers have entered the workforce. Although women are faced with new options related to careers, childrearing is still a life's goal for most. The majority eventually find themselves facing the challenges of managing the conflicting demands brought on by juggling the dual roles of career and motherhood. The emerging progress on technology had lead parenthood to many plans.

Since the primary use of Internet is communication, it is generally understood that its usage will have the positive social consequence in the people's everyday lives, because it increases the frequency and quality of interpersonal communications among people. People with easy access to other ought to feel better connected and more strongly supported by others, leading to happiness and engagement in families, organization, communities, and society more generally. The ease of electronic communication may lead to weaker social ties, because people have less reason to leave their home and actually interact face to face with other people (Kraut et al, 1998).

The influence of the Internet on interpersonal relations is further examined by Bargh, Mckenna, and Fitzsimons (1999), who articulated and tested a theory of relationship formation on the Internet. In a series of longitudinal and experimental studies, these researchers directly addressed the argument that the psychological quality of traditional face to face interaction. They found that relationship that develop through the internet are close, meaningful and long lasting, suggesting that many of the concerns expressed about the quality and meaningfulness of internet interaction are unfounded. Further, they found that people bring relationship formed on the internet into the real world by meeting, talking with, and otherwise connecting with other way show how self-concept and social identity play crucial role in this process.

According to Gross, Juvonen and Gable (1998), the most striking finding of their study is that adolescents use the internet like telephone, rather than as an opportunity to try different personalities and identities. Their study finds that Internet communication is very similar to the "traditional youth social interaction".

As a result the use of Internet does not shape psychological well-being in any way that different from the influence of social interaction via other modalities. Kiesler (1986) purported that internet communication is less complete because of its lack of important social information. The more anonymous communication is individualized, however, the author suggest that, far from the image of individuated often presented by social psychology, social identity perspective would argue that individualized, anonymous communication are likely to be governed by group norms.

Computer mediated communication (CMC) is rapidly turning the world into Marshall McLuhan's "global village." It is an almost miraculous medium where people can communicate individually with each other, mediated by nothing more than computers and wires. The contrast with previous broadcast media is obvious; in CMC, there are no editors or censors. The social implications of CMC are vast, from its potential ability to overthrow centralized control of information to its potential ability to help people, no matter what their gender, race, or physical appearance, communicate with each other with fewer prejudices and misunderstandings than any other medium in existence. Computer mediated communication is a fascinating extension of the ways in which human beings already communicate. It has the potential to be liberating, and it has the potential to duplicate all the misunderstandings and confusion which currently take place in interactions between mother and children in everyday life. The choice of directions is not being made deliberately, but is being made in the thousands of daily online interactions, the choices of ways of speaking, and of subjects, which are gradually shaping, as a

river slowly carves a canyon, the culture of cyberspace (We, 2009).

Communication is the most popular use of the Internet, with email topping the list of all the technologies used. Some of the types of communication technologies used also include email discussion groups, Usenet news, chat groups, and IRC. These are unique to networked computer environments and have come into wide popularity because of the Internet. Other technologies, including video and audio conferencing and Internet telephone, are also available on the Internet. They require more multimedia capabilities of computer systems and are more taxing of network resources than the others. They also are adaptations of other technologies to the Internet. Most of the technologies that are unique to the Internet require communication to be done in text—letters with some symbols and punctuation. Communicating effectively involves taking the time, except in informal communications, to use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation and writing an appropriate message (Mackhan, 2000).

Henline and Harris (2006) found that there were also negatives related to technology and couples in three main ways. First, they discovered that communication through technology can create problems accurately interpreting the true intention of the message. Clearly, such misunderstandings can disrupt the couples communication patterns both on- and offline. Second, participants who are continually connected to the Internet via phone or computer reported greater degrees of feeling "smothered" by their partners. Third, participants reported those who become over-involved in online activities may neglect household responsibilities or the maintenance of their relationship.

The maximum effect of the internet is actually on the daily life of the individuals because indeed there is no aspect of life which is not influenced by the internet and its uses. The researchers desired to surface the vibrant experiences of Filipinos who utilize the internet to communicate with their children from afar. Specifically, the researchers explained on the ways these mothers handled the situation of providing care and maintain their relationship with their children.The results have mapped the effects of distant relationship and the role of Cyberspace bridging this particular gap.

This study explored on the lived experiences of Filipino mothers and their children. The study was guided by the central question: What is the characterize value of internet in bridging mother and child relationship?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was approached qualitatively allowing the subjects being studied to give 'richer' answers to questions put to them by the researcher and to give valuable insights which might have been missed by any other method. It has the ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue. It provides information about the "human" side of an issue – that is, the often contradictory behaviors, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals. The researchers used in-depth interviews for this study to have optimal insight collection on individuals' personal histories, perspectives, and experiences, particularly when sensitive topics are being explored.

Phenomenological study is a concerned the lived experience to human phenomenology is an approach to thinking

about what life experiences of people are like and what they mean. Phenomenological study is a process of illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actor in situation.

To describe a "lived experience" of a phenomenon as this is a qualitative analysis of narrative data, methods to analyze its data must be quite different from more traditional or quantitative methods of research (Waters, 2009).

Research Site

The locale of study was conducted in the National Capital Region, Philippines.

Description of the Informants

A total of (6) key informants were interviewed in this study, three (3) of which were purposively selected 3rd year students taking Bachelor Science in Nursing, together with their parents (3).We chose them because at certain point in time, at that age the student understand the hardship that their parents are doing just to give their child financial support, as well as the students. The mothers were also interviewed guided by an aide memoire. The criteria used for selection were the following: [1] The mother of child should be working or living in different country for at least 1-2 years, [2] the mother and her child are communicating through the internet, and [3] they are willing to be part of the study [4],3rd year nursing student

Data Gathering, Instrumentation and Procedure

The researchers acquired consent form the informants and the letter to the institution was secured for them to conduct the study. The respondents were interviewed guided by a researcher-made aide memoire accompanied by a cover letter explaining the reason of conducting the study. The

interviews were transcribed on the spot by the researchers.

Cool and warm analyses were utilized to extract the major themes. Cool analysis is the culling of significant statements and deleting non-important one. Warm analysis is the grouping, sorting and giving name to the themes.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers ask the informant to sign an informed consent to ensure autonomy. The researcher's study are able to explained fully for them to understand its goal and procedures. All personal information has been deleted on the final manuscript.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Three (3) mothers and their children were purposively chosen to serve as the corpus of data to give elucidation to the research inquiry. The richness of the information has made the researcher come up with one major theme entitled: *Interconnected Relationship*.

Furthermore, through qualitative analysis, two subthemes emerged to discuss such event, namely: [1] Immediate Access, and [2] Feels Near, but so Far. Through the assistance of a critical research companion (Del Rosario, 2012), the researchers assimilated the themes and have come up with the following simulacrum (see Figure 1):
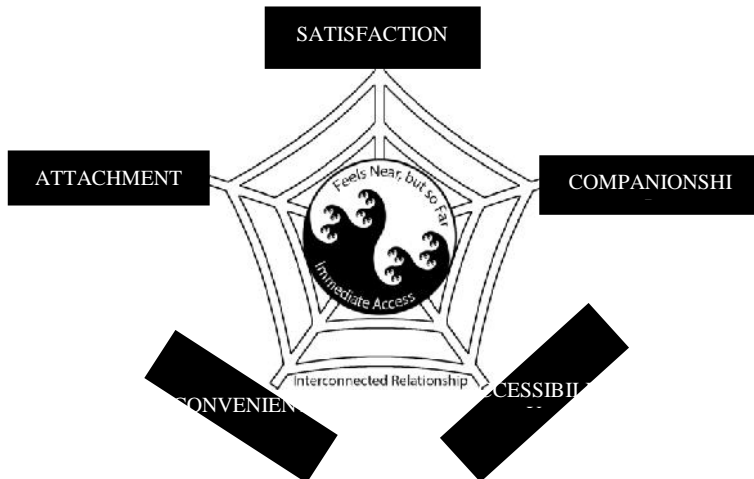
Figure 1 Modified Yin-Yang on a Web

The simulacrum is composed of a modified yin-yang placed in a spider web. Yin and Yang symbolizes the two subthemes, Immediate Access and Feels Near, but so Far. Even though Yin and Yang pertain to two complimentary forces (Encyclopædia Britannica Inc, 2012), one cannot exist without the other. Similarly, the two subthemes are very much associated with each other since one affects the further. The Yin-Yang symbol was also modified to look like ocean waves, which symbolizes the great distance that separates the mother and the child. Lastly, the Yin-Yang symbol is placed at the center of a web to pertain that this relationship is created in cyberspace. The Yin-Yang image is a revolving fractaline yin/yang taken from benhem.com (2012) and the web image is taken from deviantart (Devrez, 2010).

Interconnected Relationship

The researchers have implied that distance does not hinder relationship between mother and child when there is an existing means of communication with each other, thus the major theme Interconnected Relationship was made. Technology plays a huge role in maintaining relationships between the two people even at great

distances. Similar to the previous researches such as by Fitzsimons (1999), the relationship created by cyberspace is meaningful, close and long lasting, which is quite the contrary from what Kraut et al (1998) has speculated, that it may weaken social ties between the two entities.

Subtheme 1: Immediate Access

Immediate Access refers to the easiness of communication between two entities even if they live from each other. According to the informants, using the internet to communicate is easy and helpful in maintaining communication between each other. As they verbalized:

> *"Siyayung medium naming pag nag-usap kami ni mama* (It is my medium to communicate to mommy)*." [S1]*
> *"Importantesiyakasi connected pa din kami kaymamikahitmalayosiya… mas easy saamin* (It [*the internet] is important because we are still connected even though we are afar)." [S3]*

Mackhan (2000) purported that communication is the most popular use of the internet. And as the informants have stated, internet seems to be living up to its reputation. The technology was utilized fully by the respondents to preserve what they have before they were separated.

Subtheme 2: Feels so Near, but so Far

While the previous subtheme pertains to a more physical face of communication, this subtheme denotes more of the emotional aspect of cyberspace communication. This subtheme refers to the feeling that the two people are still close to each other even though there is a huge

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physical gap between them. The subtheme is supported by the following statements:

> *"…nawawalayung homesick kodito…* (it's relieving my homesickness)"* [M1]
> *"…everythingnanangyarisa kanilaalamko pa din…* (I know everything that's happening to them)*" [M3]*

Furthermore, this subtheme is greatly associated to the first subtheme because the feeling the two people gets is greatly caused by the accessibility of communication.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings extracted from the experiences of the mothers providing care through the help of internet, major and minor themes have risen up. Through the major theme Interconnected relationship, the researcher realized that the mother who provides care through the help of internet, experiencing satisfied emotion in caring their child and vice versa to the child they able to cope in the situation. They felt being satisfied and convenient using the internet in communicating with their children even though they are far from each other. Both the mother and child are feeling the effect of using the internet like it able to brings closer every family member and make it feel they just truly existing in their home and specially it relieves stress that able to keep the relationship they had before but living apart.

The present study has developed a simulacrum fitted to become a basis and framework to grasp the essence of the lived experiences of the participants. The arguments presented in the simulacrum

serves as a guide for mothers who are interested in going abroad, as well as those who are already there. Furthermore, this would help future researchers for building the foundation of new researches.

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