



ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE STUDIES

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

School Age Children's Exposure To Sexually Explicit Materials and Parental Awareness : A Qualitative Study Done in Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City Addis Ababa.

BY

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**A Thesis Submitted to the School of Psychology in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Social Psychology**

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a Degree in any university and that all sources of materials (published and unpublished) used for The thesis has been dually acknowledged in the text and reference lists.

Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

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List of Acronyms

APA	American Psychological Association
CSA	Child Sexual Abuse
IPA	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
PSB	Problematic Sexual Behaviour
SEM	Sexually Explicit Material
WHO	World Health Organization

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to assess the possibility of school age children's exposure to sexually explicit materials and also to assess parental awareness on the subject in nifas silk lafto sub city Addis Ababa. The study followed a qualitative research approach specifically the study employed a face to face interview for eight parents and eight children. The participants were obtained through snowball sampling and the data was analysed by using interpretive phenomenological analysis. The findings of the study show that there is a discrepancy between children's and parent's reality. This study can contribute in equipping parents with the necessary awareness to protect their children from early exposure to sexually explicit materials.

Key words : School Age children, Sexually Explicit Material, Parental Awareness.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Back in the early nineties, when television was just being popularized in Ethiopia , there used to be a television show called “Acapulco bay”, which was aired on the only television channel Ethiopian television (ETV). Kids as young as five and six years olds used to watch the show and attempt to re-enact the scenes in there house play, however the show was by no means meant for kids. With the introduction of VHSs and DVDs older children used to rent films including sexually explicit ones and they used to keep the films within the reach of younger children.

The technologies were a new phenomenon in Ethiopia, the same was true for the rest of the world too. Most parents in households with TV, VHS, later CD and DVD didn't even know how to operate these devices. Since these devices were the indication of economic status of households, parents were more focused on protecting the devices from damage than on what damage can the devices bring. Parents even used to underestimate their children's intelligence and assume children can't understand what is being shown.

In the meantime the introduction of the internet made the availability of SEM more effortless. Even though the production and use of SEM have always been there in many civilization(Jenkins, 2025), with the rise of easy accessibility to many information and communication technological devices one can wonder how extensive the problem got.

According to the American national Child Traumatic Stress Network[NCTSN](2009), child sexual abuse is divided into two. One involves touching and the other involves non-touching behaviours. Touching behaviours mostly involve directly touching the child on the other hand non-touching behaviours can include voyeurism, exhibitionism, or exposing the child to SEM. According to this definition children's exposure to SEM is considered as child sexual abuse (CSA).NCTSN(2009) also state that CSA is an international problem which can affect all ages, genders, races, ethnicities, and economic backgrounds.

Even though the introduction of the Internet made the anonymity accessibility and affordability of SEM very easy (Nufer, 2017), The American National Coalition to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (2013) states that “The Internet is only one source of exposure to sexual content. A study of random selected youth showed that music contained the most sexual content (40%) followed by movies (12%) and television (11%).”

The Canadian centre for child protection (2025) states that most parents think that their children’s aren’t exposed to SEM, however even school age kids are being exposed to this materials while trying to find other things on the internet. A study done in China on, parent–child discrepancies in reports of exposure to violence/pornography on mobile devices and the impact on Children’s psychosocial adjustment, also show that 80 percent of the parents who participated in the study were unaware of their children’s exposure to SEM. The study suggests that this happened due to poor relationship between the child and parent, poverty and children’s excessive use of devices. The study also suggested that children whom their parents are unaware of their exposure to SEM have emotional and behavioural problems (Liu et al, 2020). Another national Survey done in United States of America on 10 to 17 years old adolescents and children state that:

Among adolescents who report intentionally Looking at pornography, the report of household Rules delineating no pornographic web sites is related to a three-fold increased odds of reporting online seeking behaviour compared to offline-only Seeking behaviour. It is possible and likely that this Is a reflection of household rules following an incident (i.e., a caregiver discovers the young person Has gone to websites and then institutes a household rule). Web site filters and other parental controls are of cited remedies for caregivers hoping to shield their youth from unwanted exposures (Ybarra & Kimberly, 2005).

The same study also state in its abstract section “children under the age of 14 who have intentionally looked at pornography are more likely to report traditional exposures, such as magazines or movies”.

Based on this the aim of this study is to asses if nifas silk lafto sub city children have the possibility to be exposed to SEM and to asses parent’s awareness about children’s exposure to SEM.

1.2. Problem Statement

The production of SEM is not a new thing, archaeological artefacts show that people have always been interested in making explicit materials. What is new in our generation is that anybody with a digital device can not escape it. Its becoming harder by a day to encounter a movie that does not have nudity and profanity. The vulgarity in music and music videos seems to be a necessity for its success. Scrolling through most social media outlets without being hit by some obscenity is becoming rare. Unlike any preceding times in history people can produce, consume, share, and save SEM with minimum financial cost, sometimes even for free, within the comfort of their homes.

Meanwhile all these things are happening parents let their children to use any digital device available, even the ones with Internet connection, for some known and unknown reasons and at the same time they assume and expect that their children will not be exposed and will not be interested in SEM. Specially in religious communities parents assume that if their children learn the religion they will be immune from any lewdness. Studies show that Children under the age of eight do not even have the full ability to differentiate what is happening on the screen from what could possibly happen in real life (Collins et al. , 2017). This means a child who is exposed to SEM might think everything they watch is real, normal and acceptable, this might lead to problematic sexual behaviour(PSB).

In recent years, the rapid expansion of digital media and mobile technology has increased children's access to information, including content that may be harmful to their development. In Ethiopia, urban centres such as Addis Ababa have experienced significant growth in internet penetration and smartphone usage, exposing even young children to online environments without sufficient safeguards (Ethiopian Communications Authority [ECA], 2021). Children aged 6–10 are particularly vulnerable due to their developmental stage, limited critical thinking, and increased curiosity, which can make them susceptible to accidental or intentional exposure to sexually explicit materials (World Health Organization [WHO], 2006).

Despite this growing risk, there is limited research done on school age children in Ethiopia exploring possibility of children's exposure to SEM and exploring parental awareness.

So the aim of this study is to assess if children's exposure to SEM is a possibility among Nifas Silk Lafto sub city school aged children, and also to assess parents awareness about children's

exposure to SEM. Assessing these things might help in protecting children from the effects of early exposure to SEM have by creating awareness about the subject by filling the knowledge gap about school age children's exposure to SEM.

1.3. Research Questions

1. Is there any situations or ways in which children might become exposed to SEM ?
2. How would parents describe their general awareness and understanding of their children's media usage?
3. What are parents thoughts on the possibility that children might encounter sexually explicit materials while using different media?
4. What do parents understand about the effects that exposure to sexually explicit materials might have on children?
5. If parents found out that their children had been exposed to sexually explicit materials, how do they think they would respond or react?
6. What kinds of actions or precautions are parents currently taking to protect their children from exposure to sexually explicit materials?

1.4. Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is to asses if children's exposure to SEM is a possibility among nifas Silk lafto sub-city school aged children, and also to asses parents awareness about children's exposure to SEM. The specific objective of the study will be to:

- To asses if children use different medias that could possibly have SEM.
- To asses Parent's general awareness regarding media usage among Children.
- To asses Parent's awareness of media usage and accidental exposure to SEM among children.
- To asses Parent's awareness about the effects of exposure to SEM have on children.
- To explore what Parent's perceived reaction to their children's exposure to SEM might be.
- To identify Parent's precautions to protect their children from exposure to SEM.

1.5. Significance Of The Study

This study can be significant for parents, children, teachers, researchers, policy makers and participants. It can be significant for parents because this study will raise awareness about the risks of children's exposure to sexually explicit materials through different medias. It will also encourage more active and informed parental involvement in children's media use. By helping parents understand the psychological and behavioural impacts of SEM exposure. This study can also be significant for children by enhancing their protection from harmful media influences. By supporting the development of safer media environments. By indirectly promoting healthier psychological and social development by influencing parental responses.

The study can be significant for teachers by giving insight into the prevalence and risk factors of SEM exposure among school-age children in Ethiopian settings. And this can help in developing school based awareness programs. The study can be significant for researchers because it adds to the limited body of research on children's exposure to SEM in Ethiopia. In doing so it can offer a foundation for future academic inquiry into children's exposure to SEM. The study can be significant for policy makers in addressing policies related to child safety, digital regulation, and family education in doing so it can serve as a reference for policy makers.

The study can be significant for participants because it can contribute to a deeper understanding of the issue. Participants may gain insight into their own parenting practices and become empowered to take protective action.

1.6. Scope of the study.

The aim of this study is to assess the possibility of school age children's exposure to SEM and also to assess their parents awareness on the subject in Nifas Silk Lafto sub city. The population for this study are households which have children from six to ten years old.

1.7 Conceptual Definitions of Constructs

School-Age Children: for the purposes of this study, school age children are defined as children between the ages of 6 and 10 years, typically corresponding to early primary school grades. This age group is characterized by foundational development in literacy, social skills, and moral reasoning, while still being highly vulnerable to environmental influences, including media exposure (World Health Organization [WHO], 2006).

Sexually Explicit Materials (SEM) : Sexually explicit materials refer to media content—such as images, videos, texts, or audios that graphically depict sexual acts, nudity, or genitalia, usually intended to cause sexual arousal. Such materials are deemed developmentally inappropriate for minors due to their potential to negatively affect psychological and behavioural development of children (Flood, 2007; American Academy of Paediatrics [AAP], 2016).

Exposure : Exposure refers to the act or condition of being subjected to or coming into contact with stimuli, in this case, sexually explicit materials, whether deliberately sought or encountered unintentionally through media or peer interactions (Livingstone & Smith, 2014).

Parental Awareness : Parental awareness is the degree to which parents or guardians are informed and actively engaged in monitoring and understanding their children's access to digital content, including potential exposure to harmful materials like pornography. It includes both cognitive awareness and behavioural supervision (Wurtele & Kenny, 2010).

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

After starting with an introduction to SEM, the literature review section is divided into four parts. The first section is about different theories on childhood sexual development. The second section deals with childhood sexual development, the third section deals with children's exposure to SEM and its effects. In the last section parental awareness about children's exposure to SEM is discussed. The literature review section will also be used to compare and contrast the findings of the study with what is already known.

INTRODUCTION

Many research literatures propose several definitions of sexually explicit material (SEM). SEM is defined by many scholars from different discipline in different terms (Fisher, 2020, p. 43). In the discipline of psychology, agreed definitions are taken to be cornerstones for the development of formal theories, researchers in the field use the term SEM and pornography interchangeably, they have begun to approach a consensus about how to define pornography by employing definitions that focus on two elements. The first is that pornography is explicit and includes images of exposed genitals and/or depictions of sexual behaviours that are unconcealed. The second is that pornography is intended to increase sexual arousal. However, there is little agreement about elements of this definition. Some researchers in psychology will include in their definition of pornography texts that show only nudity with no sexual contact. By contrast, other researchers in psychology insist that in order to be explicit pornographic texts must show sexual acts or aroused genitals. (McKee, et al, 2018, p. 1086).

2.1 Different theories on childhood sexual development

Childhood sexual development is a complex, multifaceted process influenced by biological, cognitive, social, and cultural factors. While most foundational theories on sexual development originate from western psychological traditions, their application in Ethiopia must consider cultural, religious, and societal dynamics that shape childhood experiences and parental expectations. This section explores prominent theories of childhood sexual development and discusses their relevance in the Ethiopian socio-cultural context.

Psychoanalytic Theory

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory remains one of the earliest frameworks addressing childhood sexual development. According to Freud, sexual identity begins forming in early childhood through a series of psychosexual stages. In Ethiopia, where open discussions of childhood sexuality are often taboo, Freud's explicit focus on infantile sexuality may not align well with cultural norms. Nonetheless, some scholars argue that understanding unconscious psychological drives remains important for grasping hidden behavioural patterns in children (Tadele, 2020), especially when such issues are rarely discussed in families or schools.

Cognitive Developmental Theory

Jean Piaget's cognitive-developmental theory is more culturally adaptable in the Ethiopian context. Piaget (1952) asserted that children's understanding of sexual concepts develops gradually as their cognitive capacities mature. In Ethiopia, where formal sex education is limited and largely influenced by religious doctrines (Gebreyesus & Berhane, 2018), children's cognitive development around sexuality often depends heavily on informal sources like peers and media. As a result, misconceptions about bodily functions, reproduction, and gender roles are common among school-aged children (Alemayehu et al., 2020). This underscores the importance of age-appropriate, culturally sensitive education aligned with children's developmental stages.

Social Learning Theory

Bandura's social learning theory emphasizes the role of observation and reinforcement in shaping behavior (Bandura, 1977). In Ethiopia, children often model behavior after parents, teachers, religious leaders, and increasingly, media. The rise in mobile phone and internet access, even in urban poor communities, has exposed children to sexually explicit materials without adequate parental mediation (Wagaw, 2022). In highly conservative or religious households, where open discussion about sexuality is discouraged, children may internalize contradictory messages—receiving moralistic teachings at home while observing liberal content online.

Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is particularly useful in understanding childhood sexual development in Ethiopia, as it accounts for the influence of multiple environmental systems. At the microsystem level, the family and religious institutions in Ethiopia often serve as

gatekeepers of sexual knowledge. At the macro system level, broader cultural values such as those rooted in Orthodox Christianity or Islam reinforce norms of modesty, silence, and shame around sexual topics (Yimam & Kassa, 2016). These influences often prevent children from receiving accurate information, increasing vulnerability to misinformation and exposure to inappropriate content.

Sexual Script Theory

Sexual script theory, proposed by Gagnon and Simon (1973), posits that individuals learn sexual behaviour through culturally constructed narratives. In Ethiopia, children are often introduced to sexual scripts through gendered expectations, where girls are taught to be submissive and sexually passive, and boys are encouraged to be dominant (Mekonnen, 2019). These scripts are reinforced through both formal (e.g., religious teachings) and informal (e.g., folk stories, peer talk) channels. Given the lack of comprehensive sexuality education, children often form incomplete or distorted scripts that persist into adolescence and adulthood.

2.2 Childhood Sexual Development

Many disciplines are interested in the study of human sexuality. Biologists, medical scientists, psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists and many more disciplines address the subject from their perspectives (Kok, 2004, p 39). According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2006), Sexuality is a central aspect of being human and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, and reproduction. “It is a lifelong process that begins at conception and continues through all stages of development, from infancy to the elderly. Therefore, children are also sexual beings” (Ortega, 2020, p. 62). At age 8-10 months, infants become aware of their genitalia and by the age of three, they usually have developed a fixed gender identity. By the time of their fourth birthday, they perceive themselves as being either boys or girls for life (Greydanus & Pratt, 2016, p. 292).

Childhood is a time when children explore and discover their own sexuality, both alone and through interacting with others. Sexual behaviours in children are quite common, sexuality is a developmental phenomenon, and like other developmental domains is affected by the child's ecology. By emphasizing childhood sexuality as expected and normative, children can get a head start toward becoming sexually healthy and respectful adolescents and adults as well as

becoming less vulnerable to being sexually exploited and exploiting others (Wurtele & Kennym,2012,p.18).

A range of sexual behaviours in pre pubertal children from early phases of development that are obviously normative and reflect positive development (R. Cacciatore et al ,2019,p.4). According to the Association for the Treatment and Prevention of Sexual Abusers (ATSA, 2020) sexual knowledge and behaviour are impacted by caregiver, peer, community, and media influences (including sexually explicit material) and responses. Typical normative sexual behaviours (e.g., being curious and sexual play) can remain healthy or become concerning and problematic depending on these responses and influences (p. 5).

Children develop sexually, just as they develop physically, emotionally and socially. Even young children have sexual feelings and may engage in sexual behaviour .Sexual behaviour can be a problem when it is developmentally inappropriate or involves other children. It is always a problem if it involves pressuring or forcing other children. It can also be a problem if the family does not consider the behaviour normal or acceptable. There are different causes of sexual behaviour problems in children. Since sexual behaviour is learned, in most cases it is the result of what children have seen or experienced. Children may see sexual behaviour of parents, older siblings or baby sitters, or on television and in magazines. Some children who are sexually abused act out sexually or become sexualized (Harborview CBT+,2012, p. 3).

Research shows that preschool-aged children who have been sexually abused show more sexual behaviour than children who have not experienced abuse. This Is not to say that all children who act out sexually have experienced abuse or that all children who experience sexual abuse act out sexually, but uncommon or concerning behaviour requires careful consideration by adults. Behaviour that is Intrusive, hurtful, and/or age inappropriate requires careful consideration, can be an indication of underlying emotional problems, or that the child is living or has Lived in an environment where they experienced inconsistent caregiving, violence, abuse, or neglect. The child may have also been exposed to pornography or other Sexually explicit materials.(Canadian Centre for Child Protection,2019,p. 2). According to Hornor (2020). Children under the age of 12 years engaging in problematic sexual behaviour (PSB) need to be assessed for exposure to pornography and possible sexual abuse(p. 196).

Healthy childhood sexual development plays a key role in child sexual abuse prevention. Many adults are never taught what to expect as children develop sexually, which can make it hard to tell the difference between healthy and unhealthy behaviours. When Adults understand the difference between healthy and unhealthy behaviours, they are better able to support healthy attitudes and behaviours and react to teachable moments. Rather than interpret a child's actions with an adult perspective of sex and sexuality, adults can promote healthy development when they understand what behaviours are developmentally expected at different stages of childhood (Greydanus & Pratt, 2016,p. 300).

2.3 Children's Exposure To SEM And Its Effects.

According one Portuguese study "today's children live mediatized childhoods and it is no longer possible to contemplate children's social and cultural worlds without considering the role played by the media. In fact, the media have a huge impact on societies and people's lives", that it is an enormous affair (Pereira, 2013, p.172).

One in four youth who regularly use the internet encounters unwanted sexual pictures every year. At this annual rate, the rate of all those exposed over the five to ten year period of their childhood internet use is likely to be quite a bit higher. Unfortunately, we do not know what are comparable rates of exposure for other environments. Unwanted exposure may occur from cable TV in homes or other locales that have adult channels, such as videos and movies in which rating information was ignored or misunderstood, from book or magazine displays, or from friends or schoolmates. Still, 25% annual exposure rate is a level of offensive exposure that is higher than most adults would expect (Mitchell & Finkelhor,2003, p. 348).

Another study done in Australia state that young people learn about sex, sexual health and relationships from various sources including schools, parents and families, peers and media. Media and online sources are consistently identified as key sources of information, often more so than parents and schools . Online environments provide easy access to a plethora of diverse resources which young people value exploring privately to avoid embarrassment. Online sources also provide access to sexually explicit media (SEM) and pornography, which Australian young people are more likely to view unintentionally in their pre-pubescent years, and intentionally throughout adolescence for pleasure .(Zen et al, 2024,background).

Television, movies, music, and magazines contain a great deal of sexual content and little discussion of emotions, responsibilities, or risks associated with sexual activity. In 2005, More than two-thirds of television programs contained sexual content, but portrayals of safer sex were rare. A variety of evidence links exposure to sex in traditional media with shifts in sexual attitudes, behaviour, And outcomes (Collins et al, 2017,p.163).

Children and adolescents are growing up in a digital world. The rapid expansion of the development, accessibility, and use of cellular phones and the internet is changing human existence. Adolescents are absorbed in the use of technology; However, this behaviour is also becoming characteristic of younger children as well (Livingstone & Smith, 2014). Consider that in 1970, the average American child began to watch television regularly at age 4, yet today, children begin interacting with digital media at the age of 4 month although technology can enhance communication, recreation, and education, its use can also present risks to children and adolescents. One such risk is exposure to pornography. It is difficult to dispute the fact that the internet has revolutionized the pornography industry and has substantially expanded child and adolescent access to pornography. The Internet allows instant access to a wide variety of pornography that can be viewed anywhere, even from the privacy of a child's room, with little to no parental knowledge (Hornor, 2020,p.191). Recently, the global Burden of Disease Study showed that unsafe sex is the second highest risk contributor to mortality among 15- to 19-year-old men and women globally (Matkovic et al, 2017).

Since the internet's creation in 1983 its use and the content it provides has increased exponentially review suggested that over 4 million websites contain SEM. Since their review, the number of SEM websites has substantially increased, with most recent estimates suggesting over 2.3 billion websites containing SEM with the increasing SEM available on the internet comes concerns regarding whether children could access this content (Koletic, 2017).

New technologies have expanded adolescents' access to pornography. Online pornography differs from the pornography of the past in some critically important ways. Online content is always "on" and is portable, allowing access at any time and in any place. It can be interactive and more engaging, so there is potentially increased learning and exposure time. Extreme forms of violent or sexual content are more prevalent on the internet than in other popular media. Participation Is private and anonymous, which allows children and adolescents to search for

materials they could not search for in traditional media. Finally, online media exposure is much more difficult for parents to monitor than media exposure in traditional venues. National and International studies reveal that exposure to online pornography is common among boys and not uncommon among girls. Within the United States, 42% of 10 to 17 year olds have seen pornography online, with 27% saying they intentionally viewed such materials. An examination of 15 to 18 year olds found 54% of boys and 17% of girls admitted to intentional viewing (Collins et al, 2017,p.164).

Fisher (2020) explains that as internet use becomes more common among children, often introduced through educational tools like tablets, many develop online skills at an early age. With a significant number owning smartphones or tablets, children now spend many hours online each week. This widespread access increases their risk of encountering sexually explicit material (SEM), whether intentionally or unintentionally. Fisher notes that children are often exposed to SEM through pop-up ads, misleading website names that mimic children's content, or malware within apps designed for kids. One example cited was a website named "Teltubbies.com," which appeared to be child friendly but hosted explicit content before being taken down in 2003.

Compared to traditional sexual media, there is limited research on how sex-related content on social media affects adolescents. Despite this gap, social media use among teens is widespread. Facebook, for example, is used by about 71% of U.S. adolescents aged 13 to 17. Since 2012, teens have expanded their use across various platforms, including Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter, complicating efforts to study the effects of social media. Emerging research has begun to examine how exposure to sexual content on these platforms may influence adolescent behaviour. One study found that sharing sexual content online was linked to offline sexual risk taking, such as casual sex. Additionally, a longitudinal study of Dutch adolescents found that both viewing and sharing sexually suggestive content on social media were associated with stronger beliefs in the importance of being sexually expressive. These exposures also indirectly increased adolescents' willingness to engage in casual sexual behaviours by shaping more favourable perceptions of peers who acted similarly (Collins et al., 2017, p. 164).

According to Canadian Centre for Child Protection (2019), today children have tremendous access to information via the internet, television, music videos, advertisements, and other emerging technologies. Never before have parents and professionals been more concerned about

children's exposure to sexually explicit material and the impacts on their healthy sexual development. Much of the messaging in current pop culture promotes the normalization of harmful sexual behaviour. Research suggests that early exposure to sexually explicit material is likely to have a negative influence on children. Children process sexually explicit information differently than adults do. In the past, it was thought that children simply didn't understand sexually explicit information and therefore were unaffected by exposure. Children are generally concrete thinkers and do not have complex abstract thinking capabilities. Research now shows that although they are incapable of processing the information, they may store it and continue to be reminded of it as they grow older.

Many studies have documented that early exposure to SEM may have various negative impacts on the development of risky sexual behaviour. Risky sexual behaviour has been linked to both Physical (e.g., unwanted pregnancy and STIs) and mental (e.g., depression) problems (Lin, et al, 2020, p.16).

According to a study done by Young (2017) with the title of " Pornography, Sexual Development, and Youth: Impacts of Early Exposure ", children exposed to pornography between ages seven and eleven were more likely to experience depression and lower life satisfaction in adulthood compared to those exposed later or not at all. This may be due to their limited ability to critically assess sexual content, leading to distorted beliefs about sexuality and unhealthy comparisons. The study also found that early exposure increased acceptance of violent or coercive sexual content, suggesting that pornography can significantly shape sexual attitudes and normalize harmful behaviours from a young age (Young, 2017, pp. 21–22).

In Ethiopia, research on exposure to sexually explicit materials (SEMs) has largely focused on adolescents and university students, leaving a significant gap regarding the experiences of younger school age children (ages six–ten). Yet existing data suggest that SEM exposure often begins earlier than adolescence, raising concerns about its possible onset during middle childhood.

A foundational study conducted across 18 high schools in Addis Ababa found that the majority of in-school youth were exposed to SEMs, with frequent exposure significantly associated with early sexual activity (Berhanu, 2008). Watching sexually explicit movies was the strongest predictor of sexual experience. Additionally, having a positive attitude toward SEMs and already

being sexually active were significantly linked to increased exposure. Protective factors included being female and living with both parent likely indicative of closer parental monitoring. Importantly, mere prohibition of SEM use did not reduce exposure, highlighting the limitations of restrictive parenting without active engagement or communication.

Another cross sectional study conducted among 770 preparatory school students in Hawassa City reported a high prevalence of SEM exposure, with sex, school type, substance use, and accessibility of SEMs identified as significant predictors (Habesha et al., 2015). The authors emphasized the global rise in premarital sexual activity, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where half of girls aged 15–19 are sexually experienced. The study pointed out the critical need for adolescent-focused health and social services, including sexual and reproductive health education.

Further supporting these findings, a study in Nekemte town (East Wollega Zone) identified smartphones and the internet as the primary sources of SEM exposure (Garuma et al., 2020). Many students reported imitating the sexual behaviours they viewed. Factors associated with exposure included being male, father's educational level, possession of SEMs on mobile phones, and prior warnings against watching pornography again emphasizing the limited effectiveness of warnings without proactive engagement.

Similarly, research in north Shewa zone found that exposure to SEMs was significantly associated with being male, having friends who watched SEMs, older adolescent age (17–19), lower family socioeconomic status, and substance use such as khat chewing (Woldeamanuel et al., 2020).

At the university level, a study at Ambo University revealed that 55% of students had been exposed to sexually explicit electronic materials in their lifetime, and 52% within the past year (Shallo & Mengesha, 2018). Male, senior, and sexually active students were more likely to report viewing SEMs, with the most commonly cited reason being the search for sexual information.

Concerning younger adolescents and digital safety, a 2022 report by End Violence Against Children found that 10% of internet-using children aged 12–17 in Ethiopia were victims of serious forms of online sexual exploitation and abuse, such as coercion into sexual acts through

blackmail or manipulation with gifts (End Violence Against Children, 2022). This highlights the growing risk of early digital exposure even before adolescence.

Further emphasizing these concerns, Nigatu & Raji (2024) analysed Amharic language YouTube content and found that even child friendly search terms could lead to sexually explicit content. This finding underscores the lack of effective content filtering in local digital platforms, making younger children particularly vulnerable to accidental exposure.

Cultural dynamics in Ethiopia further complicate the issue. Parent child communication about sexual matters remains limited due to cultural taboos and discomfort, reducing the likelihood that children will receive guidance on processing or resisting SEM exposure (Yibrehu et al, 2020). Instead of open discussion, many parents adopt overprotective or avoidance strategies that leave children ill equipped to navigate their digital environments (Tsehay, 2023). Research consistently shows that effective parental monitoring such as living with both parents is a protective factor, while mere restriction or prohibition has little impact on actual exposure levels (Berhanu, 2008; Garuma et al., 2020).

Despite increasing evidence of early SEM exposure in Ethiopia, no published research directly addresses children aged 6–10. The available literature largely focused on adolescents reveals patterns and predictors of exposure that likely extend to younger age groups. This points to a critical gap in research and practice. Proactive strategies such as parent education, digital literacy programs, and early sexuality education are needed to protect school aged children and support healthy sexual development.

2.4 Parental awareness on children's exposure to SEM

A research done in New Zealand state that :

Parents' awareness in comparison with their child's actual exposure to sexually explicit content is still unknown . This is mainly because of the methodological and ethical issues around the sensitivity of the topic and collecting data from younger children. Research shows that young people frequently view SEM/pornography, often from young ages (nine to 13). This can potentially influence their sexual attitudes. Parents are essential sexuality education providers; however, information assessing parental perspectives, resources, and programmes for SEM literacy is scarce. Experts encourage harm reduction approaches that support parents' ability to

help their children develop the necessary skills to critique SEM and form attitudes conducive to respectful relationships (Zen et al, 2025). Children are spending more time than ever online, however parents are not always aware of how much of that time is spent engaging in potentially risky online behaviours and interactions. Many parents admit to having no knowledge about what their children do online, and children are aware that their parents lack this knowledge (Byrne et al, 2014, p215).

Norton Online Family Report (2010) show that Parents are concerned about children accessing indecent material or giving out personal Information online, yet they underestimate the extent to which children download Games, music and video. These are key activities which may expose children to Inappropriate content and encourage them to disclose their personal details. A study by Byrne et al also state that “Parents often underestimate the degree to which their children engage in risky online activities such as cyberbullying, worrisome interactions with strangers, and exposure to sexual content”.

Parental knowledge of their children’s lives is related to positive development and psychosocial adjustment. However less is known about parental knowledge of their children’s online experiences and activities, which is becoming increasingly more important as children and adolescents spend a substantial amount of their time online. Research on the accuracy of parental knowledge about such online activities is sparse . Most of these studies suggest that parents often underestimate the frequency of potentially adverse online experiences. Parents underestimated how often their children (ages 11–16) were accidentally or intentionally exposed to negative online content similarly, parents underestimated the frequency with which their children (ages 12–17) used the internet, visited inappropriate websites. Several studies showed that parents also underestimated how often their child was a victim or a perpetrator of cyberbullying (Geržičáková et al, 2022).

Another study showed that majority of parents have a medium level of internet threat awareness and they may not fully understand the associated threats. This is due to the lack of knowledge and skills of using the internet compared to their children, which will make it difficult to control their children’s activities. The difference in level of awareness among parents might arise from several factors. First is the frequency of the parents’ use of the internet. Parents who use more internet have lower awareness of their children’s online activity. This is because when the parents

spend more time on the internet, they will consider themselves to have more knowledge on how to use the internet. Parents who have poor parental communication with their children have poor awareness of their children's activities. The quality of communication also reflects the relationship of the family. Children who have poor parental relationships and unsupportive peers might turn to the internet to cope with their stress. This will lead to problematic internet usage. Thus, when the children are involved with unnecessary activities, they will not tell their parents (Mustaqim et al,20121).

Research results show concerns about the accessibility and impacts of online pornography, with mixed responses from parents. While children mainly use the internet for entertainment, some parents recognize its educational value. Parents express awareness of probable accidental exposure to online pornography and its physical and psychological impacts on children. Responses to accidental exposure range from silence to educating children about the inappropriateness of pornographic content. However, awareness of gender differences in reactions remains limited among parents (Pasha et al,2024).

A study done in Pakistan show that, study participants showed a moderate level of awareness about the perceived response to accidental exposure to indecent online content among children. However, very few parents revealed that they will discuss the issue with their children, and most parents indicated their perceived reaction as “silence” about their child's accidental exposure to online indecent content. Although, these findings showed the parent's awareness about the online risks but their response to the relevant phenomenon is consistent with the argumentation by where they consider parents as underestimating the online risks against children. However, some parents also emphasized the role and impact of guiding children can be beneficial. Guiding children regarding safe internet usage, particularly concerning content risks, is important because it empowers them with the knowledge and skills to navigate the online world responsibly. Educating children about the probable dangers and how to identify and evade inappropriate or harmful content can help fend their well being and maintain their integrity. Also, guidance regarding safe internet usage promotes critical thinking, digital Literacy, and liable online behaviour, providing children with the tools to make informed decisions, guard their privacy, and establish positive online relationships (Ali & Pasha,2024,p.387).

Parents had five main reactions when realizing that their children had viewed pornography: 1) angry, shaming, or punitive; 2) calm and factual; 3) ignoring, minimizing, or denying that it happened; 4) panic or fear; and 5) lying to the child about what the child viewed. Most parents reacted calmly, while a small percentage reported that they hit, scolded, or shamed their young children for seeing the pornography. Many reported not knowing what to say or do. Development and evaluation of parental scripts for developmentally appropriate parent-child communication about pornography could benefit the field (Rothman et al, 2017).

It is concluded that parents should understand the various purposes of social media, remain aware of potential risks, implement effective parental mediation strategies, tailor approaches to individual children, and promote collaboration and digital literacy education. As central figures in children's lives, parents can play a pivotal role in supporting children to navigate the digital world of social media safely (Pasha et al,2024).Family guides to children's internet safety typically recommend a variety of other measures parents can take to protect children like having rules, checking the screen, or checking the computer's history function (Mitchell & Finkelhor,2003,p. 354).

There are three main parental mediation strategies can be applied more generally to all media: Active mediation refers to the discussion between the parents and the child regarding the content while the child is using the internet. Thus, parents will comment upon the content and discuss it with the children. Restrictive mediation consists of parents' setting rules that limit the media uses which includes limiting the time spent or content. Co-viewing involves the parents viewing the media or using it together with the children (Mustaqim et al,2021).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

In this chapter the following topics will be discussed : research design, the site of the study, The study population, data gathering tools, sample, and sampling techniques. The description of Tools, data collection, and data analysis procedures as well as ethical issues will be present.

3.1 Design of the Study

The study applied a qualitative research approach specifically a phenomenological design . The qualitative research approach is particularly suited for exploring complex social phenomena where understanding the depth, context, and meaning of human experiences is essential. Unlike quantitative methods, which focus on measuring variables and testing hypotheses, qualitative research allows for rich, detailed insights into participants' perspectives, behaviours, and interactions within their natural settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Therefore, the qualitative approach is justified as it provides the methodological flexibility and depth necessary to capture the complex social realities involved in this sensitive research area.

3.2 Site And Population Of Study

The research's target population was households in nifas silk lafto sub city which have school age children with the age of six to ten years old.

The site of the study, nifas silk lafto sub city is one of the eleven administrative sub cities (kifle ketema) of Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. It is located in the south western part of Addis Ababa, encompassing both densely populated urban neighbourhoods and rapidly expanding peripheral zones. The sub city covers an estimated area of 68.3 square kilometres (Central Statistical Agency [CSA], 2021).

3.3. Sample And Sampling Technique

To access the participants for the research a snowball sampling technique was used. Snowball sampling is an effective non probability sampling technique particularly suited for accessing hard to reach or hidden populations where a sampling frame is not readily available (Noy, 2008). Which makes it suitable for this study , the technique can help to identify participants who may be reluctant to openly discuss such sensitive issues due to social stigma or privacy concerns. By

gaining trust within existing social networks, the researcher can gain access to participants who might otherwise be difficult to recruit, enhancing the richness and diversity of the data collected.

Based on this sampling technique, eight parents, whom all of them are mothers, and eight children, who were both genders, were obtained for this study. The sample size was determined by the researcher to be eight parents and eight children after granting a saturated data.

Mothers were chosen because research has shown that maternal reports tend to be consistent and valid sources of information when assessing children's experiences and behaviours (De Los Reyes & Kazdin, 2005). Moreover, mothers are often more accessible and willing to participate in studies related to child welfare, making them practical primary informants (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Therefore, engaging mothers as the main information providers enhances the accuracy and depth of data collected in child centred research.

3.4 Data Gathering Tool

The data gathering tool for the research was semi structured face to face interview which is also called patterned interview.

The researcher adapted four interview questions from a research done in Pakistan with the title of “Examining Parent's Awareness About Children's Accidental Exposure to Online Indecent Content: A Micro-Level Qualitative “ by Sana Ali and Saadia Anwar Pasha (2024) after making sure it's eligibility to apply. The researchers state in the study concerning about their developed interview the following:

The researchers designed the gathering tool and sent it for approval to four subject experts (including senior professors from sociology and communication Studies). The subject experts suggested some revisions and approached the questionnaire in the revised form. The final draft of the questionnaire was based on the 4 themes that further helped to identify the sub-themes are responses (P.375).

By adding one more question and by changing the word “online indecent content “ to “media and SEM” the questions were modified. This change was needed because in Ethiopian context most school aged children do not have their own personal devices. The developed themes were:

1. The Possibility of children's exposure to SEM.
2. Parent's general awareness regarding media usage among Children.
3. Parent's awareness of media usage and children's accidental exposure to SEM.
4. Parents' awareness about the effects of accidental exposure to SEM among children.
5. Parent's perceived reaction to their children's exposure to SEM.
6. Parental precautions to protect children from SEM exposure.

3.5 Data Gathering Procedures

First one participant known for the researcher who have a school aged child was obtained. Then participant number one introduced participant number two, who also have school aged child, to the researcher. The procedure continued until the researcher obtained a reasonable data saturation.

3.6 Pilot Study

The research was originally supposed to be done in school, however because of the sensitivity of the topic parents did not want to participate in study so no data was obtained what so ever. After realizing this the sampling technique was changed to snowball sampling and the population was also changed to a community.

3.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Since interview questions significantly shape the analysis techniques used to analyse qualitative interview data, this study also followed the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as S.Ali and S.A. Pasha (2024) study.

By using IPA, the researcher can gain a comprehensive and empathetic understanding of participant's perspectives, which quantitative methods may overlook. This makes IPA especially appropriate for studies focused on understanding how people interpret phenomena in their context, enabling richer, more meaningful data interpretation.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

The participants were asked for their cooperation with respect and their consent was obtained with a signed paper agreement. Participants were informed in the written agreement paper about the study's purpose, Procedures, and what is expected of them. They also were informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any time, about the confidentiality of the research

and about the precautions that will be applied to protect their children from any additional knowledge about the subject during the research. The interview questions for the children were also discussed first with parents. To protect children from any harm the researcher only asked children about their media use and online activities

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULT

This chapter presents the findings of the study using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which focuses on exploring how participants make sense of their experiences. The analysis is conducted deductively, guided by the research questions.

Research Question 1: In What situations or ways might children become exposed to sexually explicit materials (SEM)?

Theme 1: The Possibility of Children's Exposure to SEM

Children's accounts revealed multiple pathways through which they might encounter SEM, either directly or indirectly. While most children reported watching cartoons on television, such as channels like MBC3 and CN, they also indicated broader media consumption, including dramas, films, and online content.

Several children (C3, C4, C5, C6, C7) reported watching horror movies, which often include violent or semi explicit content. C4 shared:

"It's not scary but when they mutilate the heart it's disgusting, I even throw up sometimes."

This quote reflects the child's vivid and unsettling experience, which may not qualify strictly as sexually explicit material but indicates a potential for psychological harm due to age-inappropriate content. Similarly, C3 remarked:

"I saw an Indian movie called Manjelic with my sisters. It's so scary."

These narratives point to unsupervised or incidental exposure during routine family viewing. Moreover, children's familiarity with platforms like YouTube and TikTok suggests self directed media engagement. C2, C4, C5, C6, C7, and C8 stated they actively search for content themselves. While C8 noted that they seek parental permission, C7 admitted:

"We used to play a game called Granny on my father's phone, so I simply typed and searched Granny game on YouTube and found the videos."

This experience illustrates how innocent searches can lead to exposure to frightening or potentially explicit media. These findings align with previous studies highlighting the ease with which children encounter inappropriate content online, even when their initial intent is benign (Livingstone et al., 2017).

Research Question 2: How do parents describe their general awareness and understanding of their children's media usage?

Theme 2: Parents' General Awareness of Children's Media Usage.

Parents generally believed their children watched only age appropriate content. Many (P1, P2, P4, P6) stated that their children primarily watch cartoons:

"They watch television and they only watch cartoons" (P4 & P6).

However, some parents acknowledged their children's access to platforms like TikTok when with older siblings (P3, P7). This discrepancy between assumed and actual media usage illustrates a gap in parental awareness. According to Livingstone and Helsper (2008), many parents underestimate their children's digital autonomy and exposure.

This finding also reflects the IPA principle of double hermeneutics: while participants try to make sense of their children's behaviours, the researcher interprets those interpretations to uncover underlying assumptions and meanings.

Research Question 3: What Are Parents' Thoughts on the Possibility of Children Encountering Sexually Explicit Materials Through Media?

Theme 3: Parents' Awareness of Accidental SEM Exposure

Most parents (P1 to P5) acknowledged the possibility of SEM exposure, yet qualified their concern by emphasizing limited screen time and imposed restrictions:

“Yes, but they don't have much time, and we restrict their device use” (P1-P5).

This sentiment reflects an optimistic belief that regulation mitigates risk. In contrast, a few parents (P6, P7, P8) denied any likelihood of exposure:

“Because they do not watch, I do not think they will get exposed” (P6).

Such beliefs can contribute to a false sense of security, as children may still encounter explicit materials unintentionally (Peter & Valkenburg, 2016). These contrasting perspectives highlight varied levels of parental vigilance and the complexities of monitoring media in the digital age.

Research Question 4: What do Parents understand about the effects of exposure to sexually explicit materials on children?

Theme 4: Parents' Perceived Harms of SEM Exposure

Parents unanimously agreed that SEM is harmful, though they differed on the nature and severity of the effects. P1, P2, P4, and P5 emphasized that such content is “not appropriate for their age,” reflecting moral and developmental concerns.

One parent (P5) shared: “I fear they will be addicted to it like any other addictions.”

Another parent (P7) offered a reflective response:

“It’s hard. I never thought about it. Maybe I need to ask and understand. It will create bad feelings in their head... they might want to watch more.”

This uncertainty and openness to learning reflect the IPA goal of capturing personal meaning-making processes. Similarly, P8 expressed concern about identity modelling: “It’s harmful because she might want to be like them.”

These parental interpretations align with research suggesting that exposure to SEM may influence children’s attitudes, behaviour, and psychological development (Owens et al., 2012; Brown & L’Engle, 2009).

Research Question 5: How do parents think they would react if their children were exposed to SEM?

Theme 5: Parents’ Perceived Reaction to Children’s SEM Exposure.

Half of the parents (P4, P5, P6, P8) reported that they would try to communicate with their children: “I will try to communicate and understand them” (P5).

Others expressed a desire to erase or mitigate the memory: “We have to find a way to make them forget” (P1, P7).

P3 denied the likelihood of exposure, saying: “I do not think there will be a possibility... but if there is, I will take action.”

P2 offered a more introspective response: “What can I do if they are already exposed? I will be disappointed in myself... Once the harm is done, it’s done.”

These reactions reveal a spectrum of coping mechanisms, from denial to proactive engagement. According to Davidson (2014), parents' emotional responses to their children's exposure are influenced by cultural norms, religious beliefs, and parental self-efficacy.

Research Question 6: What precautions are parents currently taking to protect their children from SEM exposure?

Theme 6: Parental Precautions and Preventative Measures.

Most parents (P1-P4, P6, P8) mentioned restricting screen time as a primary precaution:

“We restrict what they watch and how long they use the phone.”

One parent (P5) cited religious teachings as a safeguard: “I tell them about God's punishment.”

However, one parent admitted: “Because of my work, it's hard for me, but I know there will not be anything outrageous.”

These insights demonstrate a reliance on both external (rules and monitoring) and internal (moral or religious) frameworks to guide children's behavior. Prior studies also confirm that active mediation especially when combining open dialogue with restrictions has a more protective effect (Wright et al., 2014).

Finally through a deductive application of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, this chapter has explored the lived experiences and interpretations of both children and parents regarding exposure to sexually explicit materials. The data reveals that children's access to media is more expansive than some parents assume, and while most parents are aware of potential harms, their protective strategies vary significantly.

The IPA approach helped surface nuanced insights, particularly where participant narratives diverge from their assumed or stated beliefs, showcasing the layered complexities of managing children's media use in a digital world.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Even though parents assume that they are aware of their children's media usage the above results show otherwise. Since children can not be asked direct question regarding their exposure to SEM because of ethical issues, they were asked about what they watch through different medias and about their online activities. Unlike their parents answers all of the children have seen many films and movies, most even saw horror ones, and all of them also can search for things on the internet independently with out parental supervision from this we can assume that there is a possibility of children's exposure to SEM. Because researches show that widespread access to internet increases the risk of encountering sexually explicit material (SEM), whether intentionally or unintentionally. Children are often exposed to SEM through pop-up ads, misleading website names that mimic children's content, or malware within apps designed for kids (Fisher, 2020). This finding also aligns with already existing research that state "parents awareness in comparison with their child's actual exposure to sexually explicit content is still unknown. This is mainly because of the methodological and ethical issues around the sensitivity of the topic and collecting data from younger children." (Byrne et al, 2014, p215).

Most parents in the study are aware of their children's exposure to SEM might be a possibility however they assume their restrictions and their children's busy schedule makes the matter less worrisome. The remaining few parents denied that the possibility of their children's exposure to SEM altogether, assuming that they are aware of all of their children's media exposures. However "most of these studies suggest that parents often underestimate the frequency of potentially adverse online experiences. Parents underestimated how often their children (ages 11–16) were accidentally or intentionally exposed to negative online content

similarly, parents underestimated the frequency with which their children (ages 12–17) used the internet, visited inappropriate websites” (Geržičáková et al, 2022)

Parents think that children’s exposure to SEM do have harms but all the parents are unaware of the full impact early exposure to SEM can have on children.” Many studies have documented that early exposure to SEM may have various negative impacts on the development of risky sexual behaviour. Risky sexual behaviour has been linked to both Physical (e.g., unwanted pregnancy and STIs) and mental (e.g., depression) problems.” (Lin,et al, 2020,p.16)

Communicating with their children was half of the parents perceived reaction to their children’s exposure to SEM. Researches show that some parents assume that if their child were exposed to sexually explicit materials (SEM), they would respond by communicating openly and supportively with them. These assumptions often reflect their intentions, beliefs about good parenting, or perceived preparedness, even if they have not previously encountered such a situation. Research also shows that intended behaviour does not always translate into action, especially when the issue is emotionally or culturally sensitive (Miller et al., 1998).

Ethiopian research also show that in more conservative or religious communities, parents may claim they would communicate but may ultimately defer or avoid doing so due to cultural taboos, gender norms, or fear of encouraging immorality (Yousef, 2019).

Parents precautions to protect their children from SEM was restriction. Which is one of the three parental mediation “Restrictive mediation consists of Parent’s setting rules that limit the media uses which includes limiting the time spent or content. (Mustaqim et al,2021).

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

6.1. Conclusions

This study examined the possibility of school age children's exposure to sexually explicit materials (SEM) and assessed the level of parental awareness and response within nifas silk lafto sub city, Addis Ababa. The findings demonstrate a significant discrepancy between parents' perceptions of their children's media habits and the children's actual experiences, highlighting a critical underestimation of SEM exposure risks. Although most parents acknowledged that SEM poses potential harm, their understanding of its psychological, behavioural, and developmental effects was often limited .

Parental strategies to mitigate exposure predominantly relied on media restrictions. While these approaches reflect cultural and moral values, they were frequently implemented without adequate supervision or open dialogue, reducing their effectiveness. Furthermore, responses to actual or potential exposure varied widely from proactive communication to denial or passive hope that children would not encounter harmful content.

These results underscore the necessity for more comprehensive parental education on digital literacy, child development, and the evolving nature of media risks. Interventions must prioritize equipping parents with the skills to engage in age appropriate conversations, set realistic and informed boundaries, and actively monitor children's media environments. Moreover, community and policy level engagement is essential to support families in addressing these challenges, particularly in contexts where discussions of sexual content are culturally sensitive.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed for parents, community stakeholders, and future researchers. For parents, there is a critical need to enhance awareness of the types of media children access and the associated risks of exposure to sexually explicit materials (SEM). Active mediation is encouraged through open, age-appropriate conversations with children, which can foster trust and strengthen awareness. Parents should also supervise media use by monitoring device activity, setting clear rules, and utilizing parental controls while avoiding sole reliance on restrictive measures. Improving digital literacy among parents is essential to better understand children's online environments and potential risks. Additionally, leveraging support from schools, religious institutions, and child protection organizations can help guide families toward healthier media habits.

For community members and religious leaders, promoting open dialogue around children's media use can help reduce stigma and build collective awareness of SEM exposure. It is important to develop culturally sensitive educational programs that respect community values while addressing the realities of digital risks. Community leaders can also support parents by facilitating awareness workshops, distributing informational materials, and fostering a supportive environment for child protection.

For researchers, there is a need to expand the scope of inquiry through larger, longitudinal, and diverse studies across different socio-cultural contexts to understand broader patterns of SEM exposure and parental responses. Developing child-friendly research methods that minimize social desirability bias and encourage honest communication is essential. Interdisciplinary collaboration integrating perspectives from psychology, education, digital media, and religious studies can help design holistic and impactful interventions. Future research

should also explore policy-oriented strategies that support parental education and child safety in digital spaces. Moreover, evaluating the effectiveness of parental mediation practices, educational initiatives, and community engagement efforts will be critical in identifying best practices for reducing children's exposure to harmful content.

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Appendix

Letter of consent

የፍቃድ መጠየቂያ ደብዳቤ

ሰላም ስሜ ሀውለት ሸምሱ ይባላል። በአሁኑ ሰዓት በአዲስ አበባ ዩንቨርሲቲ የሶሻል ሳይኮሎጂ የማስተርስ ጥናቴን እድሜያቸው ለትምህርት የደረሱ ልጆች (ማለትም ከ ስድስት እስከ አስር አመት ያሉ ልጆች) ለእድሜያቸው ለማይመጥን ነገር በዋናነትም ለልቅ ምስሎች ያላቸው ተጋላጭነት ምን ይመስላል፣ ወላጆችስ ስለ ጉዳዩ ምን ያክል ግንዛቤ አላቸው የሚለውን በማጥናት ላይ እገኛለሁ። በዚህ ሁኔታ መሃከል ለልጆች ስለ ጉዳዩ ምንም አይነት አዲስ ነገር ላለማሳወቅ ከፍተኛ ጥንቃቄ ማድረግ እና የርሶንም ሆነ የልጆችን መረጃ በምስጢር መያዝ ሞያዊ ግዴታዬ መሆኑን አሳውቃለሁ። በጥናቴ ላይ ለመሳተፍ ፍቃደኛ ከሆኑ፣ እባክዎን ከዚህ በታች ባሉ ጉዳዮች ላይ መስማማቱን በፊርማዎ ያረጋግጡልኝ።

1. ለልጄ ለልጄ አእምሮ በሚመጥን ቋንቋ ቃለ መጠየቅ እንዳዳደርግ መፍቀድትን።
2. እርሶም ለቃለ መጠይቅ ፈቃደኛ መሆኖትን እና ስለ ጥናቴ በቂ መርጃ ማግኝቶትን።
3. የእርሶን እና የልጆችን ቃል መጠየቅ በድምፅ እንድቀዳ መፍቀድትን በፊርማዎ ያረጋግጡልኝ።

ፊርማ.....

ስለትብብር ክልብ አመሰግናለሁ።

ማሳሰቢያ: በማንኛውም ሰዓት ጥናቴ ላይ መሳተፎትን የማቋረጥ መብት አለዎት።