

A Preliminary Study: The Availability of Multimedia Applications in Truancy Awareness

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Abstract—This article is a feedback report from respondent related to the study of persuasive multimedia in truancy awareness for secondary school students in Malaysia. Method used in this study is interview, with the purpose to collect the information of the availability of multimedia applications in truancy awareness and to gather information regarding truancy issue in Malaysia schools. Five respondents were selected to participate in the interview, there are: a counselor from Henry Gurney School Melaka, two secondary school discipline teachers and two secondary school teachers. Findings from the preliminary study shows that the prevention programs in schools to educate and creating awareness among students from truancy behavior is still lacking in Malaysia. As a conclusion, the implementation of persuasive multimedia in truancy awareness needs to be designed and developed to assist as well as to enhance the truancy awareness in Malaysia.

Index Terms— Truancy, Awareness, Persuasive Technology, Multimedia.

1 INTRODUCTION

Truancy is a term that is generally defined as a specified number of unexcused absences or intentionally absence from school over a period of time. Truancy consequence has been found prevalent and have significant relationship with other discipline problems among secondary school students. Truancy is related to drop-out from schools, problems in academic, low academic performance, delinquency and substance abuse [1],[2].

In Malaysia according to the [3] report, during the 2012 school session, a total of 107,191 students was involved in discipline problems. The report also listed the number of students involved in ten types of misconduct. The highest number of misconduct was truancy (17343) followed by impolite behavior (15407), criminal behavior (14321) and smoking (14298). Misconduct that involved small percentage of students includes obscenity (3778) vandalism (3630) and delinquency (9926). As stated by [4] playing truant is the major cause of the types of misconduct listed by Ministry of Educations, Malaysia.

In Malaysia the prevention attempt to reduce truancy primarily were focus on school-based counseling as a dominant solution in interventions of truancy [5]. As observed by [6], studies show the students often feels guidance and counseling teachers have harmful intentions

on them and perceived meeting with the school counselor as a punishment or being punished without reason. Therefore questions have been raised regarding the effect of the program given to these students. According to [6] it has been reported that such program had cause tension to student and considered it as a punishment, as a result involuntary feeling happened to the treatment student and it can be considered improper used to the student

With regard to this, as suggested by [7], creating awareness about the danger of getting involved in truancy and criminal activities would be much more effective in arresting the problem compared to simply meting out punishment. Thus there is a need to expose these children to appropriate educational programs so that they are aware of their behavior that might negatively affect their personal and know the consequences of their behavior in future life [8]. With so much emphasis being placed on the use of multimedia instructional material in schools, it is surprisingly found that very little indication exists that school systems are using multimedia instructional as a solution for truancy prevention [9].

Thus the lack of studies on the effects of using multimedia technology on truancy awareness prompts questions about its importance. Since there is lack of research on education programs that utilize the use of computer technology, especially the media in learning to create truancy awareness for children in schools, therefore this problem could be solved using persuasive technology and multimedia learning for student's truancy awareness. In conjunction with the above statement, the purpose of this interview is to; (i) confirm the availability of multimedia applications in truancy awareness. (ii) To gather information regarding the issue of truancy in Malaysian schools, (iii) To clarify the factors that lead to the needs of conceptual model in truancy awareness.

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2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Captology

The emergence of computer technology such as websites, games and interactive software has affected attitudes and behaviour either incidentally or accidentally. Studies have proved that multimedia provides many advantages in assisting learning [10], multimedia has offered a new way of learning for educators and learners in which the learners can have access to the material and learn from various platforms in obtaining the knowledge.

Using multimedia also attracts the learner’s attention in term of self-meaningful learning, self-paced interaction and retention in understanding of the content [11], thus helps learners to integrate information more effective. Whereas for educators this technology can support in constructive learning development that allowing the educators to focus on facilitating and assisting the student thus improve the knowledge acquisition.

In line with that, the field of education is not an exception and has been directly impacted by persuasive technology. Persuasive technology is a research field that overlaps computing and human psychology aspects in a unified domain. [12] defined persuasive technology as the technology designed to change attitudes or behaviors of the users through persuasion and social influence, but not through force and action. Thus, this recent area of study that explores the overlapping of persuasion and computing technologies is known as Computers As Persuasive Technology or “captology” (figure 1.)

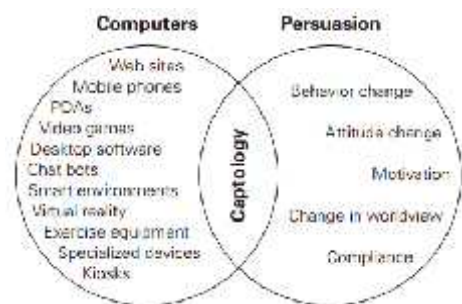


Figure.1 Captology.[13]

The use of appropriate multimedia technology can enhanced children’s cognitive and social abilities [14]. In line with that, as suggested by [15] the use of multimedia learning is believed to have the potential as digital persuader as effective as human which enables behaviour change in a selected target Therefore, awareness would be enhanced by using appropriate computer technology, thus provides great solutions for various fields such as social aspect and promote positive learning environments.

According to [13], persuasive technology can change people’s live in three related ways based on the functional role or how user respond to the computer system, it is; computer as a tool, as a media and as an actor (figure 2).

Figure. 2 Functional Role of Computer. [13]

Functional role of computer performs as a guideline or framework for designer and developers in developing



interactive technology applications. Functional role of the computer is based on how users reflect during performing a task using computers. Thus, analyzing the computers roles is important to increase the power of persuasion in a computer. [13] explained the functional roles as follows:

1. *As a tool*, computer can increase people's ability to make target behavior by making it easier to do. For example, during installation, the computer system will guide users to perform specific task and motivate to perform the completion, or health monitoring devices to help users monitor their health with specialist.
2. *As a media*, the interactive technologies can provide interactivity and narrative to create persuasive experiences to the users, thus helping people rehearse their behavior and allowing people exploring the cause-and-effects relationship. Example Simcity game assists city planner observed the growth of the city and making the necessary arrangements.
3. *As a social actor*, computer can be persuasive by giving a variety of social clues (e.g. reward, praise, animated icon) to triggers users to response. Digital pet is a very good example on how computers persuaded users to accomplish certain task and maintained the behavior during a period of time.

Thus, examining the functional roles in developing the successful persuasive system is crucial for designer and developer to make sure the target users will be persuaded. Each of the functional roles comes with its own set of persuasion principle or techniques. It is important for designers to understand the functional role of computer in investigating or examining the persuasive computing to human behaviours.

2.2 Awareness

One of the reasons given by a truant student regarding their truancy mostly related to the perception of dislike to school. Study shows that, students who do not have any self-awareness regarding school attendance will perform criminal activity and begin to violate school rules in a way to show their aggressive attitude [16]. This statement is agreed with [17] where, to overcome truancy problems that lead to negative personal outcomes,

students must have a self-awareness strategy to give them a new perspective regarding truancy.

Awareness can be defined in a broad term as the state or quality of being aware of something. Since awareness is a relative concept, it also can be translated as a conscious to objects or sensory patterns. [18] stated awareness is one of vital tools in emotional intelligence components in managing and self-control and to achieve the desired outcome.

Self-awareness is the fundamental of emotional intelligence on which other components such as self-management, social awareness and relationship management are integrated [18]. In psychological terms, awareness can be defined as a state in which people are aware of their feelings and behavior. Alternatively, it also can be defined as the understanding of mind self as an individual entity [19].

In order to take advantage of the positive aspects of persuasive multimedia for learning, the design and development of persuasive multimedia truancy awareness as form of instructional learning material must be carefully and logically designed.

Therefore, there is a clear need for a designing conceptual design model in truancy awareness to provide researchers a clear definition on how to design and develop an effective truancy awareness application. To further establish the focus area of study, a preliminary study was conducted, and is discussed in the next section.

3 PRELIMINARY STUDY

3.1 Methods

In order to confirm the lack of relevant studies to developing the research focus, the preliminary investigation has been done to support the justification of the research area. In this study an interview to get a data was conducted during the preliminary investigation. A qualitative method by using semi-structured interview has been selected as a technique to collect the information.

The semi-structured interview has advantage because it offers high flexibility for researchers to investigate unanswered questions or gained information from respondents. The purpose of this interview is to; (i) confirm the availability of multimedia applications in truancy awareness. (ii) To gather information regarding the issue of truancy in Malaysian schools, (iii) To clarify the factors that lead to the needs of conceptual model in truancy awareness.

The instrument used in the interview was an open-ended questions with seven questions of mixed formats. Before the interview began, the purpose of the research was fully explained to the respondents in order to make them aware the important of the information given to the researchers. Five respondents have been selected to participate in this interview: a Henry Gurney School Counsellor, two secondary school discipline teacher and two Secondary School Teachers.

The selection of respondents based on their experience

with more than five years in dealing with truancy issues in school. Most of the respondents that have been interviewed are from various states in peninsular Malaysia. The interview was conducted using various mediums of communication included social networking, phone call and face-to-face basis.

3.2 Results

Results are gathered from five respective respondents that are from Henry Gurney School counsellor, secondary school discipline teachers and primary school teachers.

3.2.1 Henry Gurney School, Melaka

Henry Gurney School is a school operated by the Department of Prisons Malaysia, which is intended for students who commit serious crimes within the age of 14-21. A face-to-face interview was conducted with a counselling teacher. As a counsellor, he agreed that truancy is a main factor of school drop-out and this is a major factor that caused juvenile.

This can be seen from the profile of the students where most of the juvenile is a students who involved more than 6 month of truant. He also agreed that the increasing numbers of juvenile are a serious social problem that should be prevented. He also pointed out that there is still a lack of truancy awareness among school children.

He believe that the children need to be supported with basics knowledge in truancy awareness which relate to the danger of truancy behaviour. Although there are a programs conducted by school authorities regarding discipline issues, most of the time serious attention to the causal factor of truancy is usually given after the cases of absence becomes habitual.

Since there is no such application in truancy awareness there is a need to explore to this matter. He agreed that the potential of multimedia could be applied in the process. However the educational materials used to support this knowledge regarding truancy should be appropriate to support the learning process.

3.2.2 Secondary School Discipline Teacher

Discipline Teachers play an important role in enforcing discipline among students. Thus in this interview two secondary school discipline teachers were participated in this preliminary study both are from Melaka and Kelantan. From the interview both teachers are agreed truancy issues is a challenge in schools today. Although the truancy rate in Malaysia is still moderate, he agreed that there is a lack awareness campaign related to the issue of truancy and the consequences of truancy behaviour that can affect future opportunities to the student.

In term of multimedia application to raise awareness in truancy provided by Ministry of Education (MOE) Malaysia, both of them revealed that there is no multimedia related to truancy awareness. The teacher also added that although there is a campaign program

conducted by the schools, but it depends on the initiative of the school itself. They also believed that by using multimedia in children learning could help in conveying information to children more effectively and keep them more engage in learning.

3.2.3 Secondary School Teacher

Teachers in class are the one who are involved directly with truant student. Hence an interview was also conducted with a secondary school teacher due to the situation. Two teachers were involved in this interview. They are from Selangor and Kedah. From the interview both teachers agreed truancy is one of the issues that challenges the schools today. Both teachers also mentioned that nowadays, it's seem students are dare to truant without feeling guilty or fear of punishment. It also noticed that these students is never bothered the consequences of the action to their future.

In terms of the importance of truancy awareness to the student both teachers agreed awareness and motivation will create consciousness and possibly could reduce the truancy and discipline problem. From the teacher's perspective students who lack motivation and have learning problems are those who have low levels of self-awareness. Both teachers added that by applying values and self-reflection in the development of truancy awareness will add a value to the truancy awareness program.

The teacher also indicates that the awareness campaign in school is not enough to develop truancy awareness. The use of technology such as multimedia learning tool/material should be applied to increase student knowledge about truancy.

4 Conclusion

The result of the respondents has shown that the majority of them agreed, there is a need to increase awareness regarding truancy issues. However, prevention programs in schools which educating the student and preventing them from truancy behavior is still lacking in Malaysia. Providing knowledge to the student in creating truancy awareness could develop students' attitude and motivation towards self-control and management, subsequently helping them to continually evaluate their behaviors and responses.

With regards to this, appropriate learning material and method in enhancing students' truancy awareness should be selected on the delivering of the knowledge. From the feedback by the respondent, it can be concluded their view regarding the use of persuasive multimedia in truancy awareness and the importance of self-awareness to the student will be an important approach for the researcher as a guideline in the research study.

Lastly, the preliminary investigation results have clearly shown that the research direction of this study in truancy awareness is relevant and there is clear evidence that the need of this research is necessary.

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