Student's Name

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Course Title

Due Date

<div align="center">Why Parents Should Monitor Their Children's Internet Activity</div>

It would not be an exaggeration to claim that the internet has defined this century. It is hard to think of an aspect of life, whether personal or professional, in which the internet is not shaping our behavior. The internet may still seem a novel and revolutionary technology to those who grew up in the early 90s or before but for teenagers and younger children today, the internet has always been a fact of life. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to monitor children's activity on the internet because they have internet access through a wide variety of technological tools including tablet devices and smartphones. But parents should still make all possible efforts to monitor their children's internet activity as well as influence their children's internet habits because otherwise they may have to pay a huge price for negligence.

Children are consuming information on the internet all the time which may even shape their consumption habits but children do not always have the maturity to make sensible decisions. Marketers are aware of this and are not afraid to market to children in the hope of converting them into loyal customers. A study in the *Journal of Children and Media* reported that games hosted on the internet and usually developed by marketers influence children into adopting unhealthy dieting habits (Park). Children may not always understand the marketing tactics behind these games but

parents can, thus, they can take steps to make sure their children are not exposed to inappropriate product marketing in the name of entertainment.

The internet offers almost endless entertainment opportunities, and one of the favorite pastimes of teens and young children is to play video games on the internet. Thus, the internet has the potential to become an addiction, and parents should make sure that children use the internet in moderation and do not substitute it for other activities such as social activities and academics. Children need different activities in order to live a balanced lifestyle so that they can become productive members of the society, since internet addiction may negatively affect a healthy upbringing. The Media Analysis Laboratory (MAL) at Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, found that 21 percent of the survey respondents admitted to spending less time on school tasks and household chores due to time spent playing games (Phi Delta Kappan). Parents should not prohibit their children from playing games because the latter do teach certain desirable skills, but taking any habit to the extreme is never wise. Thus, parents should make sure that their offspring engage in other activities such as social outings with friends or spending time with family. Otherwise, the virtual world may contribute to their break with reality, resulting in poor relationships and social skills.

The internet has been hailed as the enabler of information democracy but it has also created challenges for parents and the greater society. There is not a dearth of adult content on the internet but some may argue that adult content existed in media way before the introduction of internet. While that may be true, it was relatively easier to protect children against exposure to adult content before new media took root. For example, adult magazines would usually be sold behind counters and they would often be wrapped in plastic that would censor the cover. Similarly, adult programs would often be broadcast late at night when most children were asleep. But the internet has

complicated the situation because adult content exists on it round the clock and can be accessed any time and through any digital device that is internet-enabled. Websites often use cookies and computer devices are usually shared by family members of all ages. This makes it quite difficult to protect children against adult ads that may emerge on the screen out of nowhere. But, nevertheless, parents should adopt certain strategies that minimize children's exposure to adult content. One strategy may be to install parental controls. Parents may also install software that tracks children's web activity. Parents may also ensure that they never access adult content on devices shared with children. Similarly, parents should also join forces to lobby elected officials to force adult content companies into adopting policies that make it difficult for underage population to access adult content. Preventing children's access to adult content is not merely a question of ethics or moral duty but also social welfare. A study by RAND and the University of North Carolina found that teenagers' exposure to sexual content increases the risk of teenagers engaging in risky sexual behaviors in later life (Teresa).

Children often interact on the internet with those who share similar issues or problems or look for information related to the issue they may be going through at the moment. If parents pay attention, they may be able to recognize these problems (because they tend to get out of hand) and take preventive measures in a timely fashion. Children do not always find it easy to communicate with parents due to fear of punishment or being judged, and therefore careful monitoring of children's internet activity may alert parents to potential issues they may never have found out otherwise. Such issues may include problems with health, such as eating disorder or self-injury. Online support communities often do nothing but encourage children to continue with harmful lifestyles, but if parents can assure their children of unconditional support, they could play a major role in helping their children desist from harmful behavior.

But there is something else that poses an even greater risk to children's well-being other than adult content on the internet – and it's the sexual predators who target children. Often kids do not have the maturity to understand the risks of sharing private information, and research studies prove it. According to one national poll, 54 percent of girls admitted to being in a cyber relationship without their parents' knowledge (Louge). Another poll found that half of the teenagers between ages 13 and 18 communicate with those they have never met. Even more worrisome is the fact that one in eight was communicating with an adult pretending to be a young person (Sawmy). The emergence of social media has further promoted the trend of sharing of private information, and it is difficult to think of a teenager without a Facebook account. Thus, parents should keep a close eye on who their children may be interacting on the internet with and educate them on safe internet habits.

Social relationships are as important for children's healthy growth as other activities are. At the same time, it is not unusual for children to become addicted to internet and neglect other activities including social interaction. The American Psychological Association (APA) recognizes internet addiction as a disorder and its symptoms may include: sleep deprivation, spending little time with family and friends, having poor sense of time, etc. On top of that, internet addiction may lead to poor social skills, academic performance, and psychological well-being. A study found that spending too much time on the internet results in teens experiencing low social and psychological well-being during their first year at college or university (Sawmy).

The internet is a revolutionary technology, and preventing total access to it will do more harm than good to children. But, at the same time, children lack maturity and experience to adopt safe internet habits, thus, parents should play an active role in shaping children's internet habits and protecting them from the dark side of the web. The potential dangers of the internet for children

include unintended exposure to adult content, exploitation by sexual predators, exposure to marketing that promotes unhealthy lifestyle habits, and communities that may encourage bad behavior.

References

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