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Video game regulation, literacies, and marginality

Multicultural and user-centred research initiative empowering immigrant families in Norway

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Introduction

The rising popularity of video games in Norway and worldwide is often accompanied by concerns. One of the main concerns is that video games are experienced as a source of conflict within many family contexts. The underlying cause of conflict/concern has been the duality of associating gamers as digital

natives and parents as digital immigrants (Dralega et al., 2019). As digital immigrants, parents arguably lack the knowledge and skill sets to identify with or understand the digital worlds within which their young ones were born, identify with and understand (Dralega & Corneliussen, 2018a; *Ibid.*). Research into video game culture within family contexts has often implicated the “negative effects” of video games as key concerns, especially for parents. For instance, from the debates in the late 1990s and early 2000s, parents were concerned that violent video games would desensitise their children to violence and make it easier for them to resort to violent acts in everyday life (Griffiths, 2005; Karlsen, 2015). This concern has been debunked in later research, such as Ferguson and Wang’s longitudinal study (in 2019). Although this debate occasionally appears in the news media and the like, the greater concern now seems to have shifted to time-use (Handlingsplan 2019–2021; Media Authority, 2018; 2020; Frøyland et al., 2010). Parents with immigrant backgrounds have also identified the challenge of time-use (Dralega & Corneliussen, 2018a; 2018b; Seddighi et al., 2018). According to Ask (2011), many parents are worried that their children are “trapped” in the games, stealing time from school, friends, family or other, more “valuable activities”. In an argument that is relevant today, Ask found that many parents worry about their children becoming “addicted”. Other concerns with video gaming are associated with hegemonic gendered patterns of exclusion (Dralega & Corneliussen, 2018b) and “information poverty” or limited media literacy among parents with immigrant backgrounds (Dralega et al., 2020; Dralega et al., 2023).

This chapter is an offshoot of several research projects that explore the concept of digital Bildung (“formation”) generally and specifically the understanding of video game cultures, digital identity formation, and digital parenting as an out-of-school activity (Buckingham, 2015). Our 2017 study focused on video game habits, identity construction, and self-regulation among immigrant youth (Dralega & Corneliussen, 2018a).

Because this study was missing parental or family contexts, we embarked on a broader study (in 2018) examining causes of conflict and regulatory strategies within family contexts. The resultant regulation models, including helicopter and dialogical parental models, are published in Dralega et al. (2019).

Moreover, the study’s regulation patterns pointed out three factors.

A) There was a lack of knowledge and information about video games and their regulation. More importantly, in relation to media literacy, the parents in the 2018 study did not have information nor a deeper understanding of existing regulatory resources, e.g., from the Norwegian Media Authority or the Multicultural Initiative and Resource Network (MiR) and others. B) The parents also highlighted the need for informational resources in multiple languages beyond English and Norwegian. C) Some parents wanted information and knowledge that included socio-cultural sensitivity.

The subsequent study undertaken in 2020 by Dralega, Seddighi, Corneliusen and Repstad, offers the main data source for this chapter, and is focused on preventing conflict and problematic video game habits in immigrant family contexts in Norway. Building on the previous two studies, this study aimed to identify concrete gaps in terms of parental needs regarding digital media literacy and offers concrete solutions to those needs – with a different informant base than in the two former studies.

This chapter explores the research methodologies of the above-mentioned research project – particularly focusing on how the methodologies incorporated the multicultural elements and specific user needs in both the project process and outcomes.

This leads to the following research question: What are the informational and media literacy needs of families with immigrant backgrounds, and how are these needs met and what processes are involved?

Conceptually, the chapter draws from Buckingham's (2015) interpretation of the German concept of digital *Bildung* as a broader form of informal education about media literacy that is not limited to formal, technical skills or narrow functional skills but rather an expansive knowledge that empowers people to thrive within society (Buckingham, 2015). Buckingham's perspective on digital *Bildung* establishes the foundation for further analysis that draws on the associated principles of a) digital media literacy (Rasi et al., 2019), b) inclusiveness and participation, and c) user-centred development communication, initiatives, and resource development (Freire, 2020; Mefalopulos & Tufte, 2009).

The following sections include a methodological explanation. This will be followed by a finding, a discussion and concluding remarks.

Methodology

The study, which is the focus of this chapter, had the main objective of conducting a qualitative mapping of the informational needs to empower families as reflective facilitators of children's digital development and overall well-being. Employing principles of action research (O'Brien, 1998; Somekh, 2005), the project sought active involvement from various stakeholders, including target users, researchers, voluntary organisations and a developer. These groups contributed to identifying user needs, planning, and developing user-informed resources and disseminating these back to the target users (Ibid.). Engaging relevant stakeholders in the process helped gain new understanding, share ideas, and raise awareness (Somekh, 2005).

Multistakeholder partnership

It was important to ensure that action and progress were in line with the needs of the target group – e.g., language, accessibility, cultural and religious considerations. We started the qualitative research study with a process of multi-stakeholder dialogue to discuss challenges and proposed solutions (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Lewin, 1946; Gills et al., 2008). We envisioned four main phases: data collection, analysis and development, implementation and feedback, reassessment, and dissemination. Three types of actors were brought together to participate with different competencies and needs. These were the researchers, the reference group (a voluntary organisation working with immigrants), and the users (parents and young people). Given the research's descriptive, analytical and explanatory objectives, researchers adopted an interpretive research design using qualitative methodology (Bryman, 2019). The research design includes document analysis, three focus groups with parents, a questionnaire sent to their children, and a dialogue seminar with parents and the other stakeholders. Note that data involving the parents is the focus here.

Document analysis

We analysed relevant documents from the Norwegian Media Authority, the Multicultural Initiative and Resource Network (MiR), and others who

have done similar work. The aim was to obtain information from relevant documents and resources to better understand the issue (Curry et al., 2003). This was later incorporated into the informational resources developed for the parents.

Focus group (dialogue meetings)

Parents of young people who play video games were invited to 3 focus groups where the aim was to identify key issues around video game/regulation and to explore the need for preventive measures. Information from users later served as a starting point for developing interventions (Gill et al., 2008). The selection criteria were that they had a non-Western background and that they had adolescents aged 13–19 years, girls and boys, and at least one member of the family who was a regular gamer. The families were recruited from Eastern, Western and Southern Norway. The NGOs helped us recruit from their networks.

Dialogue seminars

All stakeholders (the researchers and representatives from Multikulturelt Initiativ og Ressursnettverk -MiR, Vestland Innvandrerråd – VI, Norges Multikulturelle Senter – NOMKUS, Spillavhengighet Norge were invited to a dialogue seminar to discuss the collected data and brainstorm on possible interventions to be reworked in line with the participatory research approach (Berg et al., 2004; Curry et al., 2003).

The analysis is based on the conceptual frames and the codes/themes generated from the fieldwork (Charmaz, 2006, p. 10). The study was permitted and followed Norwegian research ethics guidelines (SIKT), meaning informants' identities have been anonymised (NESH 2021). Limitations of the methodology include a) few informants (16 families), b) few voluntary organisations (4), c) limited participation (four sessions) due to short project duration (one year) and limited resources, including few languages (maximum of five languages). Nevertheless, the partners' efforts, the process, the final results, and the feedback from the testing all offer useful insights here, given

that the permissions to utilise the data (quotes) expired by the time of writing this paper. That explains why quotes have not been included here and why the materials used in this chapter are derived from the project's online resources.

Presentation of findings

This chapter explores how parents with immigrant backgrounds are empowered with digital literacy (digital becoming or development). The following sections on findings and discussion shed a light on a) the parental needs for digital media literacy, b) the processes employed in the empowerment process (looking for dialogue, participation and multi-cultural multi-stakeholder involvement), and c) establish what resources are developed and how they related to the expressed needs and processes above.

Establishing the informational, skills and capacity needs of the target groups

The informational needs and gaps in media literacies in relation to video game regulation were captured through focus groups with parents in three regions and the surveys shared with their children. The aim was to obtain an understanding of the needs in order to develop targeted resources more accurately. Several needs were highlighted.

The first was a lack of necessary knowledge and information about video games. In their 2018 study, Seddighi, Dralega and Cornelissen (2018) found the same gap among parents with a migrant background. This study confirms the deficiency, which included a lack of basic information about video games – pros and cons of video games, age limits, limit setting/regulation, etc. This was due to insufficient knowledge of Norwegian. Informants, therefore, reported a lack of multilingual information and resources. An existing review of the literature indicated that existing resources were largely limited to one or two languages (Norwegian and English) (Dralega et al., 2019; 2020).

Further, the informants emphasised the need for resources and access to information in different platforms and formats that met the needs and competencies of parents. They suggested this could be information on the internet

and physical information booklets that needed to be made easily available. In addition, they mentioned the need for an online forum where parents can be anonymous (a chat forum) and the need to meet others in the same situation on theme evenings/course evenings (such as the project cooperation with NGOs where they are members).

The informants also mentioned the need for information videos in several languages. Multilingual illustrations and visualisation of video game information were necessary not only for those who had not mastered the Norwegian language but also for illiterate or semi-literate parents. Many parents often faced a challenge: they were too exhausted to seek information on computer games and the regulation of computer games on their own initiative. Short audio-visual materials were considered effective tools for such very busy parents. Such resources, it was argued, would also help create space for parents and children to discuss games.

Turning user needs and challenges into empowering resources through inclusive multiple stakeholder dialogue, processes and output

The stakeholders were involved not only during the informant-recruitment stages but also as contributors in the discussions of challenges and solution development. These are included in the discussion below. Based on the user needs and the challenges obtained from the focus group discussions mentioned above, four concrete actions were taken after dialogue with all the stakeholders.

Output 1 – An information booklet: ‘When computer games challenge family life – An infographics information booklet with advice and tips for immigrant families’

The booklet: a) offers essential information and facts about video games and tips for regulating video games for migrant families, b) presented in two languages, c) shows summarised and easy-to-read content with illustrations and infographics, and d) can be used in a training context by the voluntary

organisations. Topics addressed here include: why are computer games popular among young people, computer game habits among immigrant youth in Norway, identity – what do immigrant youth say about it, girls and computer games, why so problematic – what are the causes of conflict over computer games, regulation of computer games in a family context, red flags – things to watch out for as parents, real or fake gambling money, taboos and parenthood, parents as role models, and information and knowledge gaps. There is also a ‘checklist’ of the most important things to remember as parents.

Needs-based and user-focused considerations in the resources, and specifically the booklet, correspond to principles around ‘communication for development’ and ‘participatory communication’ (Mefalopulos & Tufté, 2009; Dralega 2008; Freire 2020; Servaers et al. 1996). Freire (2018), for example, in ‘Pedagogies of the Oppressed’ emphasised the importance of considering the needs and skills of users when designing interventions. Freire believed that interventions, approaches, and processes meant to ‘help’ marginalised, especially adult people, who, for example, are illiterate, have weak literacy skills (and in this case, have insufficient Norwegian competence), and must consider the users’ culture, their point of view and their articulated needs. It also aligns with general media literacy principles (Livingstone, 2004) and arguments for promoting media literacy among adults (Rasi et al., 2018).

Output 2 – Cartoons: ‘Navigating video game regulation in the immigrant family context’

The cartoons captured from the study reflect different approaches to video game regulation. The cartoons aimed to inform, entertain and generate discussion. As informed by the parents, the format appeals to people with limited English language skills and those who lack the time and skills to read difficult texts. Four themes were addressed: a) taboos and information gaps, b) money in video games, c) challenges around the regulation of video games, and d) mastering the regulation of video games. These short cartoons generated from the data were translated into five languages. Research impact is achieved when it is shared with target audiences in formats and languages that are democratic and accessible to them. Creative and fun pedagogies have been adopted to enhance experiential learning and reflection for adults who are

also often too busy to immerse themselves in difficult texts. Ethical considerations have been made in that the characters are presented respectfully and decently (see Dralega and Cei 2020, p. 24) (Rasi et al., 2018).

Output 3 – Leaflets on advice for parents and on age rating

Two themes were addressed in the two leaflets, which have been translated into five languages. The first theme is: ‘Young people and video games – Advantages and disadvantages – Advice for parents and guardians’. This theme provides basic information on the positives and negatives of video games, tips on how families can avoid conflict and increase understanding of video games, and more information from other sources. The second theme ‘Young people and video games – Age rating, ‘ explains the meaning of PEGI and other symbols. In addition, this leaflet explains the purpose of age rating in video games (Dralega et al., 2020; Pegi¹). The weakness of the leaflet resource is that we managed to develop only two; more were clearly needed, and again, there was a lack of resources to develop and translate more of these.

Output 4 – Video of young people speaking out on computer game regulation

A video was developed with six young people who were not included in the above survey. They participated voluntarily with the permission of their parents. The aim was to include the voices of young people in the issue (Dralega, 2008; Dralega & Mainsah, 2012). The young people in the video talk about what video games (culture) mean to them and give advice to other young people and parents. The video is in Norwegian and has subtitles in four other languages (Dralega et al., 2020). Feedback from the testing indicated that it was useful for parents who participated to hear what young people thought about the importance of video games in their daily lives. At the same time, seen here as a limitation, the parents (in the test group) wanted the voices

1 <https://pegi.info/>

of parents and experts on the topic – something we did not have the time or resources to do.

In general, these four initiatives were well received, but there were requests for more resources that we did not have the time and capacity to provide. Following is a discussion of the findings.

Discussion

Empowering families with minority and multicultural backgrounds

This discussion starts from the reality that video games are a global phenomenon. This culture includes Immigrant youth (Dralega et al., 2017; 2018). At the same time, challenges related to video game regulation are not only an immigrant issue, as we mention in the study (Dralega et al., 2018), but an issue that concerns all parents (Media Authority, 2018; 2020; Dralega et al., 2023). However, in this analysis, we can only mention some experiences and challenges that reflect the cultural difference between the target group ‘families with immigrant backgrounds’ and ethnic Norwegians.

These differences and challenges are highlighted in cases where the informants come from a different culture, language, and with experiences from a different social system. In this chapter’s study, we identified taboos, lack of language skills, and illiteracy as some of our informants’ socio-cultural challenges. For example, our research shows that some parents (especially mothers) felt anxious about seeking help (such taboos were also taken up in the cartoons). This had several different reasons: a) conflict around video games was perceived as a taboo in some communities, and b) fear that they would be perceived as bad parents. In this context, fear of child protection services was particularly highlighted.

Classical media learning theory by Freire (2020), Berthelsen (2009), Knowles et al. (2015, 22--) and Rasi et al. (2020), among others, states that adults learn best when: a) they are motivated by their experience, interest, needs and competence, b) the learning is life-centred – when topics are based on their issues, challenges and experience, and c) they have control over their learning. The study found that parents not only lacked the necessary informa-

tion about video games and video game regulation; they, along with the young people, also lacked a critical understanding and the necessary media literacy (Rasi et al. 2020; Livingstone 2004). Therefore, the new resources highlight thematic discussions on such issues as *money* use in video games ('real or fake gambling money' in the information booklet p. 22–23, and *cartoons* p. 4–8); *gender* (girls and video games in the information booklet p. 14–15), *identity* (in the information booklet p. 12–13), *red flags* (information booklet p. 20–22), and *regulation* (in the information booklet p. 18–19).

The video, in which the young people speak, should increase the critical understanding of video games and regulation for other young people and parents. In these resources, the researchers convey the importance of several issues that reflect both literature and theory. This includes the importance of a) dialogue in the family (Media Authority, 2018, Dralega et al., 2019), b) commercialisation and monetisation in video games (Zendle et al., 2023), c) critical understanding of the implications and warning signs of video games (Rasi et al., 2020; Gentikow 2009), and d) gender and sexualisation in and through video games (Dralega and Corneliussen, 2018b). The choice of textual, audio, and visual formats as well as language translations promote critical media literacy feeds into the above-mentioned classical characteristics of learning for adults.

The role of inclusivity, dialogue and a multistakeholder approach

Rasi et al. (2020), Freire (2018) and Dralega (2008) are among those who emphasised the importance of including 'users' and their contexts in developing and using learning resources. An inclusive, people-centred (youth included through a survey) and dialogical approach that included focus groups (parents) and a dialogical meeting (with stakeholders) helped achieve an outcome that reflected the needs of users.

The processes used here are similar to Freire's (2020), Berthelsen's (2009), Knowles' (2015, 22–23) and Rasi et al.'s (2020) suggestions for media literacy. Rasi et al. (2020) and Dralega (2008) called the utilised approaches and processes here for 'empowering'.

The four dialogue sessions (three focus groups and the dialogue seminar) gave us insights into how games are 'problematized' and regulated (McCall

2008; Dralega & Corneliusen 2017), including ethnicity, culture, and, most importantly, how problems could be solved.

We developed resources based on the users' wishes for action, insights from previous research, and resources from, e.g., Medietilsynet, MIR, brochures, courses, guidance, etc.

This approach was inspired by participatory development communication, which emphasises a 'bottom-up' approach, for example, starting from marginalised grassroots groups (Servaers, Jakobsen & White 1996; Dralega 2008).

Note that the format of the booklet on "When video games challenge families – tips for parents and youth" is tailored as a course/presentation in PowerPoint, with easy-to-read language (English and Norwegian) and visuals with illustrations. As well as being able to use the resources at home, they can be used in a group context. Parents' challenges and needs are highlighted in the resources so that organisations can help with concrete activities and cooperation initiatives with schools and municipalities, for example. All resources are free and accessible to everyone. In this way, the project has addressed what Mefalopulos and Tufte (2009), Freire (2020), Dralega (2008), and Servaers, Jacobson and White (1996) emphasised as empowering, i.e. the importance of meeting users' needs, capacities, culture, and skills.

Concluding remarks

This chapter explored the research question: *What are the informational and media literacy needs of families with immigrant backgrounds, and how are these needs met and what processes are involved?* The aim was to share insights from a study (Dralega et al. 2020) on the challenges and needs migrant families have regarding video game regulation and how these needs could be met, and challenges prevented.

In the study, we established a lack of knowledge and information about video game regulation, some of which was also discovered in a previous study (Dralega, Seddighi and Corneliusen 2018). Further, a lack of corresponding resources in multiple languages beyond English and Norwegian matches a finding in the research by Netteland and Dralega (2012), which pointed out how limited the public sector in Norway considered the information needs of immigrants to be, both at the municipal and state levels. In that study,

we found that public digital services and information were not adapted for immigrants; they were created ‘top-down’ without consulting the users, and the digital services were difficult to navigate. In addition, the desire of some parents for information and knowledge that deals with cultural conditions was identified as another need (Dralega et al., 2020).

The Dralega et al. (2020) project responded to the target groups’ needs, capacities, and skills (Freire 2018; Dralega 2008; Servaers, Jacobson and White 1996). The social and multicultural perspectives and needs were captured through audio, visual images, and verbal texts using easy language and translated into five languages. These were all tested and made available for free to the public².

An important contribution of the study and this chapter is the applied methodological approach that provides insight into how action research can help meet the informational and literacy needs of ‘ethnic minorities’. We see manifestations of marginality among several of the target groups who, as “outsiders” within the Norwegian society and also as digital immigrant close relatives parenting digital native children, are constrained both by language, socio-cultural limitations as well as digital and informational illiterate- or semi-literate. The study shows that through a multi-actor collaboration and an inclusive process with the users at the centre, it is possible to deliver need-based and user-friendly services to minority target groups – in the case of this study, immigrant families who have children playing computer games.

2 <https://www.nla.no/forskning/fou-prosjekt/dataspill/gratis-ressurser/>

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