



An Exploration of Visual Communication in Educating Safe and Unsafe Touch Awareness Through Educational Books and Board Games

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ABSTRACT

The concept of safe and unsafe touch plays a crucial role in child protection by empowering children to understand personal boundaries and identify inappropriate behavior. This study, titled “My Voice, My Boundaries”, aims to increase awareness among children, parents, and the community through the integration of digital and printed media supported by visual communication and interactive learning tools. This study adopts a mixed-method research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The findings indicated a strong preference for visual storytelling, engaging scenarios, and game-based learning as effective instructional methods. In addition, a visual analysis of existing educational materials revealed that the combination of digital and printed formats with interactive elements significantly enhances learner engagement. The project resulted in the development of an interactive book and an educational board game. After the pre-test and post-test, the students were able to correctly identify appropriate body parts and respond effectively to unsafe situations, such as seeking help from a trusted adult, moving away, or firmly saying “Stop!”. They also demonstrated positive responses towards the use of vibrant visuals, cartoon characters, and interactive activities, reporting increased confidence and comfort in handling inappropriate behavior. Overall, these findings highlight the effectiveness of visual and interactive learning approaches in enhancing children’s awareness of personal safety.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The concept of safe and unsafe touch plays a crucial role in child protection and education. It focuses on teaching children to understand their physical boundaries, identify inappropriate behavior, and develop self-protective skills. This education is essential to ensure that children are aware of their rights over their own bodies and can communicate effectively if they feel unsafe. In many societies, particularly in Malaysia, discussing topics related to personal boundaries is considered sensitive, leading to a gap in awareness among children and parents. This gap is further compounded by a lack of engaging educational tools designed to address the subject. Existing

materials may not be visually appealing or interactive enough to capture the attention of young learners, which diminishes their effectiveness. Visual communication, such as symbols, games, and illustrated books, has proven to be an impactful method of conveying complex ideas to children in an age-appropriate and engaging manner [12]. Efforts to raise awareness about safe and unsafe touch must be reinforced through accessible learning tools. These tools not only educate children but also provide parents and teachers with a structured way to approach this critical topic, fostering a more informed and empowered community.

Many parents have never received formal education on discussing body safety with their children, and cultural taboos often make these conversations uncomfortable. Some parents fear that addressing this topic will create unnecessary anxiety, while others mistakenly believe that only strangers pose a threat, ignoring the fact that most abuse cases involve familiar individuals. Additionally, children often have limited knowledge about personal boundaries and may not recognize inappropriate behavior, especially when it comes from trusted adults. According to Profesor Datin Dr. Ruhani Mat Min, Pakar Psikologi dan Kaunseling Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, parents need to educate their children about relationships between family members and outsiders, additionally, parents should also be educated through social media about the issue of sexual grooming, as this platform is seen as a fast and effective way to raise awareness on related issues [9]. Schools play a crucial role in educating children about body safety, yet many still lack a structured and comprehensive curriculum on this critical issue. In Malaysia, the topic of safe and unsafe touch is included only in a limited capacity within existing educational programs. Specifically, there is a small section addressing this issue in the HePiLI (Healthy Physical and Life Skills) module by the Ministry of Health Malaysia. Additionally, the Pendidikan Jasmani dan Pendidikan Kesihatan (PJPK) (Physical and Health Education) syllabus for Standard 3 under the Ministry of Education Malaysia briefly covers safe and unsafe touch. Developing curricula that incorporate education on body autonomy and consent empowers children with the knowledge to respect their own rights and those of others [3]. However, these efforts remain insufficient in ensuring widespread awareness and understanding among children [2].

The objective of this research to raise awareness about safe and unsafe touch among children, parents, and the community through education Game-based learning. The first objective was to educate a wide audience through educational visual messaging book such as visual messaging book especially students. Second objective to create an educational safe and unsafe touch learning tool and game activity for students and children focusing in using a visual communication approach. Visual communication is a powerful tool in educating children, the message as it enhances engagement, understanding, and retention of information. By incorporating illustrations, infographics, and attractive elements, educational materials can become more appealing and accessible. According to Rocco, a visual message accompanying text has a greater power to inform, educate, or persuade an audience [13]. Developing a learning tool—such as an attractive book, board game, or activity-based workbook—can make the learning experience fun and engaging. Game-based learning methods, such as role-playing activities or storytelling with visuals, can help reinforce key messages while making the topic less intimidating for children. The use of symbols, color codes, and relatable characters will further aid comprehension and encourage children to actively participate in discussions about body safety.s

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 VISUAL MESSAGING

Visual messaging has long been recognized as a powerful tool for communicating concepts to children. Research consistently shows that children process visual information more effectively than text, making visual aids crucial when addressing sensitive topics such as safe and unsafe touch. Rocco defines visual communication as the use of visual elements to convey information, ideas, and emotions and it includes images, symbols, typography, illustrations, and digital media that enhance understanding and engagement [13]. It plays a key role in education by simplifying complex ideas and making them more accessible, particularly for young learners. The importance of visual communication lies in its ability to enhance comprehension, engagement, and retention of information. This is particularly relevant when discussing children's learning, as they engage more effectively with structured visual elements that help them process information intuitively. The role of visual elements such as colours, symbols, icons, and infographics is essential in effectively conveying sensitive topics. Research by Smith and Parker highlights that colours play a psychological role in communication, with different hues evoking specific emotions. For example, warm colours like red and orange may indicate caution or danger, while cool colours like blue and green can convey safety and reassurance [18]. When addressing sensitive topics such as personal safety and body autonomy, storytelling provides a non-intimidating way for children to relate to real-life situations and understand appropriate responses. Stein also points out that children are more likely to engage with and remember information when it is presented in a narrative format rather than through traditional instructional methods [6]. Similarly, Vasquez and Chen highlight that visual stories help children develop emotional connections with the content, reinforcing their ability to recognize, recall, and apply important safety concepts [4]. Visual storytelling, through illustrations or animations, helps children connect with the content on a deeper level. This is particularly important when teaching personal safety concepts, as children must recognize not only what constitutes safe and unsafe touch but also how to respond appropriately. Visual content allows for immediate recognition of scenarios and provides a quick reference for understanding personal safety, which is vital when addressing complex topics such as consent and bodily autonomy at an early age.

2.2 UNDERSTANDING SAFE AND UNSAFE TOUCH

One critical aspect of child safety is understanding safe and unsafe touch. A fundamental part of personal safety and respect for bodily integrity is recognizing body ownership. However, discussions on body autonomy and consent, particularly for young children, are often overlooked. According to Gabriels, autonomy refers to independence or freedom, and body autonomy specifically means having control over one's body [17]. Just like adults, children have the right to control their own bodies, and any form of touch without their consent is both inappropriate and disrespectful. Consent is a key element in physical interactions, involving clear permission given through words or other forms of communication. Gabriels highlights that true consent must be given freely, without pressure, and can be withdrawn at any time. It also cannot be given by someone who is asleep, unconscious, or too young to fully understand its meaning. Teaching children about their bodily autonomy is vital, as it empowers them to set boundaries and confidently say "no" when needed. Without this understanding, children may find it difficult to appreciate the significance of consent. El Hakim and Farsani explain that safe touch involves mutual comfort and awareness, such as in handshakes, high-fives, or medical care—interactions that foster feelings of reassurance and safety [17,15]. In contrast, unsafe touch happens when someone feels discomfort or lacks awareness of the situation. Non-consensual actions, including hitting, pushing, or

inappropriate contact, can lead to fear, confusion, or isolation, making it crucial to recognize personal boundaries [15]. Unsafe touch experiences can be difficult to process and may lead to feelings of powerlessness or emotional distress. Frank states that when such experiences cause harm, they are considered unhealthy and require proper support for recovery [3]. Seeking professional help from qualified therapists, counsellors, or coaches can provide the necessary tools to heal from these experiences. In the other hand, Finding a skilled and compassionate counsellor is crucial in ensuring a safe and supportive healing process. Caregivers, educators, and adults can support body autonomy and consent by seeking permission before touching a child, explaining the importance of consent, and respecting a child's decision to refuse touch. Understanding the concepts of safe and unsafe touch, body autonomy, and consent is fundamental to ensuring the safety and well-being of children. Empowering children with the knowledge that they have the right to control their own bodies builds confidence, promotes healthy boundaries, and helps prevent abuse.

2.3 EDUCATIONAL LEARNING TOOLS FOR SAFE AND UNSAFE TOUCH.

Game-based learning has been widely recognized as an effective approach in enhancing student engagement and motivation. Digital Game-Based Learning, educational games can significantly improve learning outcomes by creating an interactive and enjoyable learning environment [7]. Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning explains that games promote active learning through problem-solving, immediate feedback, and experiential interaction [8]. In the context of child safety education, interactive tools such as board games, storytelling, and role-playing activities provide children with opportunities to simulate real-life situations. This allows them to practice appropriate responses in a safe environment, reinforcing their understanding and confidence. Combining play-based learning with educational content not only improves knowledge retention but also makes the learning process less intimidating for children. Attractive learning tools, significantly enhance children's learning experiences by providing opportunities for decision-making, problem solving, and self-reflection. These tools employ elements such as games, quizzes, and attractive storytelling to simulate real-life situations, allowing children to understand the consequences of their choices in a safe and controlled manner [10]. Brennan et al. emphasize that such tools are particularly effective in teaching sensitive topics like personal safety, including safe and unsafe touch and presenting children with real scenarios that require them to choose appropriate responses to potentially unsafe situations, these tools reinforce their ability to recognize warning signs and take protective actions [8]. Despite the rapid adoption of digital learning tools, printed educational materials continue to play a crucial role in reinforcing safety concepts. Goh et al. conducted a study on hybrid learning approaches, finding that the combination of printed and digital materials leads to better knowledge retention and real-world application [20]. However, printed resources provide a focused, distraction-free environment that allows children to absorb information at their own pace, while digital tools offer instant feedback and engagement. This multimodal approach ensures that children not only acquire knowledge but also develop the confidence to apply what they have learned in real-life situations. Incorporating interactive learning tools into personal safety education is vital for equipping children with the knowledge and skills to protect themselves.

2.4 PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

The Malaysian primary school curriculum is intended to offer a holistic education that nurtures children's academic, physical, and social development and it is designed to equip students with the

fundamental knowledge and skills needed to succeed in both school and the wider community [5]. Although several programs aim to educate children about personal safety, these initiatives are often fragmented and lack a coordinated, comprehensive strategy. Specifically, they highlight the absence of resources that effectively address the critical issue of safe and unsafe touch. This gap in educational resources not only hinders children from gaining a clear and complete understanding of how to protect themselves in situations involving physical contact but also leaves parents and educators without the guidance needed to approach this sensitive topic confidently. Addressing these gaps is essential to creating a safe environment where children are able to identify and respond appropriately to unsafe situations and it is important that all educators are well-informed when teaching children about safe and unsafe touch [7]. As children grow, their understanding of these concepts must evolve accordingly. Incorporating games and interactive activities can be an effective component of such educational programs. However, it is easy to see how true or false questions focused on safe and unsafe touch might be a beginning point in which this type of game might be adapted for this purpose. Moreover, games and activities that engage children should not merely serve as contexts for embedding knowledge; they can play an active role in shaping the curriculum itself, contributing to both the development and effective communication of knowledge. This consistent and regular exposure can strengthen children's understanding and help reinforce key safety concepts over time [7,19]. If children are able to talk about a safe touch in the framework of different subjects, they are given more contexts to understand and reflect. This is critical in order to separate normative touching from harassing touching. Because of the interdisciplinary approach, implementing, and preparing the subject matter develop a guide that addresses the implementation of safe touch lessons primarily while introducing links to other subjects and sources for the materials for different grades. This guide emphasizes that there are various topics in the curriculum that include safe and unsafe touch education like changing body conditions or social networks in social studies [19]. This raises awareness of the relevance of those subjects across the entire teaching staff as well as other staff because not merely teachers but also pedagogues, social workers, or guidance counsellors can contribute to the implementation of the subject matter.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a mixed-method research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component was used to measure students' knowledge improvement through pre-test and post-test assessments, while the qualitative component was used to observe teacher and student engagement and responses during the learning process.

Stage I: Qualitative Approach

Interview

In this study, qualitative method involves interviewing a counselling teacher at Sekolah Kebangsaan Tengku Bariah. The aim of this interview is to gather personal insights and expert opinions on the topic of safe and unsafe touch. The interview will explore how the topic is taught to primary school students, the challenges the teacher faces in delivering this information, and the effectiveness of the methods currently used.

Stage II: Quantitative Approach

The study involved 30 primary school students from standard 3 and standard 4 at Sekolah Kebangsaan Sultan Omar. The participants were selected using a convenience sampling technique, based on their availability and suitability for the study context. The primary instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire consisting of 10 multiple-choice questions (MCQ). The questions were developed based on body safety concepts, including identification of safe and

unsafe touch and appropriate response actions. Each correct answer was awarded 1 mark, with a total score of 10 marks (100%). To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by educator familiar with child safety education before being administered to students. The study was conducted in three phases:

Phase 1: Pre-test

Students were given a 10-question MCQ test to assess their baseline understanding of safe and unsafe touch.

Phase 2: Intervention and Observation

Students participated in the Touch Safety Adventure Game and engaged with the supporting educational book. The intervention focused on interactive learning, visual storytelling, and decision-making scenarios.

Phase 3: Post-test

The same questionnaire was administered after the intervention to measure improvement in student understanding.

Stage III : Finding and Recommendation.

To develop and propose an effective approach that addresses the challenges in teaching and learning about safe touch, with the goal of improving understanding and enriching the overall learning experience.

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Interview Analysis.

According to Teacher, Noor Sharifatul Adibah shared that although the topic of safe and unsafe touch included in the primary school syllabus, it is primarily taught as part of the Pendidikan Jasmani dan Kesihatan curriculum by other subject teachers. Her role in this matter is additional, involving the knowledge of these concepts through counselling and guidance when related issues happened. She emphasized that while the syllabus covers the basics, the depth of information and delivery methods could be improved to ensure students fully grasp and remember these concepts.

The teacher elaborated on the challenges faced in teaching safe and unsafe touch. She noted that the delivery of information often lacks interactive and attractive and engaging elements that resonate with students, particularly young learners. She recommended the inclusion of tools such as posters, flashcards, and trivia games to make learning more enjoyable and memorable.

Additionally, she highlighted the importance of integrating storytelling and role-play into the lessons, as these activities allow students to relate the information to real-life situations. According to her, practical demonstrations and interactive sessions can significantly enhance understanding and encourage students to apply what they learn in their daily lives. When asked about the potential use of visual communication tools, the teacher expressed strong support for using such methods. She emphasized that these tools must be age-appropriate, engaging, and culturally sensitive to effectively address the needs of Malaysian primary school students. The interview provided valuable insights into the importance of enhancing current educational practices related to safe and unsafe touch. The teacher expressed optimism about the potential of interactive learning tools to bridge the gap in understanding and make lessons more impactful. She emphasized that incorporating visual communication tools alongside traditional teaching methods would be highly effective.

4.2 PRE-TEST & POST-TEST DATA

Assessment	Mean Score (out of 10)	Percentage
Pre-test	4.3	43%
Post-test	8.6	86%

Table 1: Pre-test and Post-test Results

The pre-test was conducted to assess students' baseline understanding of safe and unsafe touch before the intervention. The results showed a mean score of 4.3 out of 10 (43%), indicating that students had limited prior knowledge regarding body safety concepts. This suggests that most students were not fully aware of how to identify unsafe touch or appropriate response actions prior to the learning intervention. After the implementation of the Touch Safety Adventure Game and educational book, a post-test was administered using the same set of questions. The results showed a significant improvement, with a mean score of 8.6 out of 10 (86%). This indicates that students demonstrated a much higher level of understanding after engaging with the interactive learning materials. A clear improvement was observed between the pre-test and post-test results. The mean score increased from 4.3 (43%) to 8.6 (86%), representing an improvement of 4.3 marks or 43 percentage points. This substantial increase suggests that the intervention was effective in enhancing students' knowledge and awareness of safe and unsafe touch.

In the other perspective, from the knowledge perspective, the game clearly helps students understand the concept of safe touch. They are able to identify examples of appropriate touch, such as shaking hands with friends and parents or being hugged by trusted adults. More importantly, after playing the game, the students demonstrated understanding of what actions to take if someone touches them inappropriately, including saying no, running away, and telling a trusted adult such as a teacher or parent. They also know how to express discomfort if someone hugs them without their consent.

In terms of interest, responses show that the children greatly enjoyed the learning approach through games. They not only wanted to play again, but also named games like "snakes and ladders" as their favorite. This indicates that learning through play is more enjoyable than passive classroom activities like sitting still and listening. Regarding the graphics and colors, the children gave very positive feedback. They found the cards and game board to be very attractive, and the images used were easy to understand. The bright colors made them feel happy and excited. The characters and settings in the game were also liked for being cute and visually appealing.

Finally, from the observation perspective on safety and comfort, the children felt at ease while playing with their friends. They also showed confidence in asking the teacher questions if they didn't understand something and expressed that they would play the game with their friends again. During the gameplay, they felt safe and happy, and even mentioned that they could help others understand the concept of touch after playing. These pre- test and post-test result show that using games to teach the topic of safe and unsafe touch is not only effective in delivering knowledge, but also increases engagement, ensures emotional comfort, and supports visual understanding through attractive graphics and colors. The findings demonstrate that interactive learning methods, such as game-based and visual learning, can significantly improve comprehension among primary school students

5.0 FINAL PRODUCT

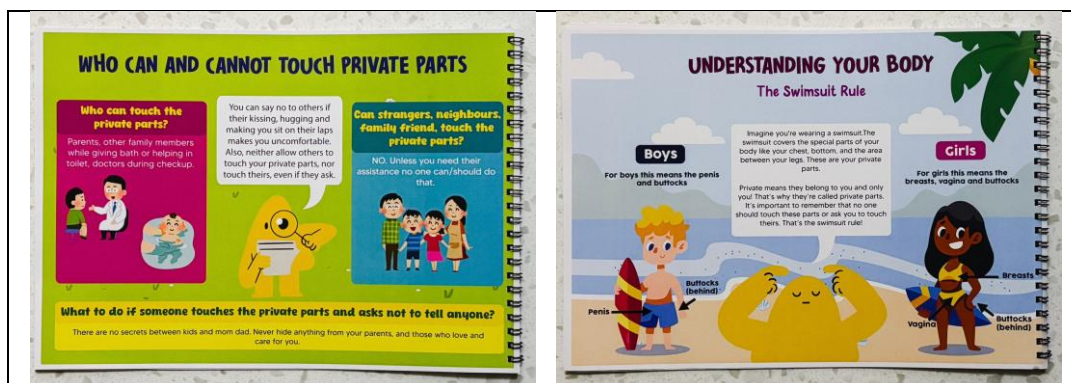


Figure 1: Safe and Unsafe Touch Educational Book



Figure 2: Touch safety Adventure & Flash Card Game

This is the final product of “My Voice, My Boundaries” for safe and unsafe touch. Following the activities, all students demonstrated a good understanding of the topic after engaging with the Touch Safety Adventure Game and reading the related book. They were able to identify body parts associated with safe and unsafe touch and knew what actions to take when faced with an unsafe situation, such as telling a teacher or parent, running away, or firmly saying “Stop!”. The students thoroughly enjoyed the activities, stating that the game and book helped them learn in a fun and interactive way. They also praised the attractive graphics, bright and cheerful colors, and cartoon characters presented in the materials. Most importantly, the students reported feeling more comfortable and confident to speak up and report any inappropriate behavior to trusted adults.

6.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that Game-based learning environments allow students to actively engage with content, which enhances comprehension and retention compared to traditional instructional methods. In this study, the incorporation of storytelling, visual cues, and decision-

making elements in the game helped students better understand abstract and sensitive topics such as body safety. The integration of digital media and interactive design provides a more effective platform for delivering sensitive educational content, especially for young learners who respond better to visual and experiential learning. However, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample size was relatively small and limited to a single school, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study relied primarily on descriptive analysis without advanced statistical testing, which may limit the strength of the conclusions. Future research should consider involving a larger sample size and applying inferential statistical methods to further validate the effectiveness of the intervention. Overall, the study highlights the potential of combining visual communication and game-based learning as an effective strategy in body safety education. It suggests that innovative digital tools can play a significant role in addressing gaps in traditional educational approaches, particularly in raising awareness on sensitive issues among children.

Author Contribution

A.Amarah: Writing and editing. Norhayatie Ibrahim: Investigation, methodology and supervision. Aima Hamizah: Conceptualisation, investigation, and visualisation.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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