POWER RELATION BETWEEN TECHNOLOGY AND INDIVIDUALS IN BLACK MIROR

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis rangkaian antologi Black Mirror yang menyajikan cerita tentang teknologi modern dan kehidupan manusia. Abad 21 merupakan era digital dimana penggunaan teknologi terus berkembang dan menjadi bagian penting dari kehidupan manusia, dampak dari teknologi sangat berpengaruh. Selain itu, kapabilitas teknologi dapat digunakan untuk mengerahkan kekuatan dan mempengaruhi individu dan dapat menimbulkan masalah. Penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana teknologi modern dapat digunakan untuk menjalankan kekuasaan dan bagaimana hal tersebut dapat mempengaruhi karakter dalam cerita yang menghasilkan relasi kekuasaan antara teknologi dan individu. Teori relasi kekuasaan oleh Michel Foucault digunakan untuk mendeskripsikan bagaimana relasi kekuasaan antara teknologi dan individu digambarkan dalam rangkaian antologi Black Mirror dan bagaimana hal itu dijalankan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan sosiologis, sinyal nonverbal dan unsur intrinsik karakter serta penokohan sebagai cara mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis data. Dari penelitian ini ditemukan bahwa terdapat tiga relasi kuasa antara teknologi dan individu yang digambarkan dalam rangkaian tersebut.

Kata kunci : *Kekuatan Relasi, Teknologi, Black Mirror*

Abstract

This research analyzes Black Mirror anthology series which present a story about modern technology and human lives. The 21st century is the time of digital era where the technology usage is continue to develop and has become an essential part of human lives.The impact from technology is influential. Moreover, the capability of technology can be used to exert power and influence individuals and can be problematic. This research analyzes on how modern technologies can be used to exercise power and how it can influence the characters in the story which resulted power relations between technology and individuals. Power relations theory by Michel Foucault's is used to describe how power relation between technology and individuals is portrayed in Black Mirror anthology series and how it is exercised. This research uses sociological approach, nonverbal signals and intrinsic element of character and characterization as the way to identify and analyze the data. From this research, it is found that there are three power relations between technology and individuals that depicted in the series.

Keywords : Power Relation, Technology, Black Mirror

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, technology has become an essential part in human relationships. The usage of technology provides multitude functions and always continues to develop to provide more functions for humans in the future. As Younes and Al-Zoubi (2015) also said, today, the use of technology is widely available and insistently promoted throughout our society. Although there are many advantages from technology, with many inventions, technology definitely can change human lives for better or worse. Technology helps to make impacts on many fields and also on society along with its advantages that can be useful, it is possible for technology to create other problems. Therefore, technology is powerful tool because it has the ability to influence, to change, or to backfire human lives. According Wilson, Rauwolf, & Bryson (2019), to the impact of humans ordinary actions is changed by the innovation of digital

and intelligent technology. It is found that an advancement of technology such as artificial intelligence impacts contemporary societies on an individual and collective level. Despite the enhancement of technology, it presents a negative influence on human beings as individuals. Apparently, technology can leads to the downside. Too much usage of technology can cause problematic impacts. Problematic use of technology results a great change in humanity and society. Study indicates that technology addiction has become a problem for humans and is a phenomena that needs to be discussed. At this age of era, human beings are very dependent on technology and making themselves artificial. People spend more time online which blocks their social activities and leads to other problems such as lack of time for physical exercise, laziness, lack of connection in real relationships, add problems to the physical health, and mental health. This results may create other problems in the future (Hossain, 2015). This implied that the change that is happening in human lives because of the usage of technology can surely influence human behaviors and can lead to problematic sides.

Humans are a social creature because in everyday life people interact or engage with others. The activities in human life involve a relationship with one another. The way in which two or more things are connected is called a relationship. According to Foucault, in every human relationship, no matter what kind of relationship it is, whether verbal communication is involved or not, relations of power relation exists (Foucault, 1997). Power is not something that can be owned, but rather something that acts and manifests itself in a certain way. Power is not something that can be owned, given, exchanged or recovered, but it is exercised, so that power only exists in action (Foucault, 1980). Power can be exercised through disciplinary technique or a certain mechanism such as panopticism

(Foucault, 1995). Therefore, in relation to that, the relation between technology and individuals as in every human relationship, power relation exists. It is clear that the usage technology can be a component to exert power. Consequently, it is important to understand the reality of change that can happen to use modern technology in a correct way because technology influence individuals and it can be problematic.

Literature is a representation of life. Literary work is a product of human creativity which tries to describe and retell the reality that exists within the society. There are many forms of literary works. According to Monaco (1981), there is an interesting parallel between the history of the art form of novel and film; both are popular arts and each began with roots journalism. These are narrative forms of entertainment. However, it was necessary for literacy culture to develop and film is highly technological while novel relies on the technology of printing and has been affected in minor ways by technological development. In literature, anthology is a series of works which are collected into a single volume with a certain theme. One of the popular works is a dystopian anthology series, Black Mirror. The storyline basically tells its stories through the theme of technology and shows how sophisticated technologies can function as a backfire against their makers in the society.

This research analyzes on the first anthology series which consists of three episodes of "The National Anthem", "Fifteen Million Merits" and "The Entire History of You" as the representation sample from the ranging episodes of Black Mirror. This series is suitable to be analyzed because it explores on the issues of advanced modern technologies and human lives. This issue is important to be analyzed because it is very relevant due to the fact that technology has become an essential part of human lives because of the digital era and how it can influence human beings. This

series is also very interesting to be analyzed because it depicts how powerful technologies can be and how it can relate or challenge individuals as it shown by the characters in the story. Other than that, this series shares possibilities that can happen as in real life technology will always continue to develop.For instance, in the present time, there are mobile applications which help us to get transportation easily such as Uber. One of its feature is driver ratings which we can rate the driver through one to five-star rate scale and the results will affect the driver. Also, nowadays people live in a world with the existence of social media where it has a feature of likes and followers. These are similar to one of the story which Black Mirror presents a story where every interaction is rated by a star scale and the results determine one's job prospects, friends, rents, and so on (Sculos, 2017). Therefore, this series is important to be analyzed because it is able to present issues of how technology can be used as such a tool for power to the individuals.

The result of this study is expected to give an understanding about the power relation between technology and individuals in Black Mirror anthology series. With understanding the power relation between technology and individuals, it will hopefully be able to show the power of technology that concerns with individuals in the society, this will hopefully help the readers especially for the parents, educators or institutions who are responsible for shaping individuals and society for using technology with more awareness. Also, this study hopefully can help English Literature students, especially for the students who are studying drama or script and creative writing so that they can apply it as a story theme on their projects. This study is expected to be a reference for the application of power relation in literary criticism and also expected to give a detail about the application of power relation theory on a literary work and broaden knowledge to everyone who is willing to explore about power relation in literature.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

To analyze a literary work, certain method and technique are indispensable. Since this study analyses on a literary work with sociological aspect which is power relation, this study uses an intrinsic theory, sociological approach, sociology of literature theory, and Michel Foucault's concept of power.

Film is a narrative form of entertainment and both film and literature came from the roots of journalism. Film is like a language which speaks trough signs and codes (Monaco, 1981). In decoding the meaning of a film, nonverbal signals theory by Paul Ekman is used. Nonverbal communication is like a language because it conveyed messages whether it is intentional or not, it is communicated through behavior or act and these behavior or act can be analyzed through nonverbal signals (Ekman, 2004). the theory is used as indicators in analyzing the power relation between technology and individuals in the series.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Power Relation between the Internet and Prime Minister Callow Character in "The National Anthem" Episode

In Foucault's view, power is more referred to as a strategy which is exercised through subjects (Foucault, 1995). According to the concept of power relation that is proposed, there is a power relation employed by using technology and it concerns with Prime Minister Michael Callow character as an individual. The kidnapper is as a vehicle of power who used technology to employ the power through a certain strategy and the Prime Minister is the target of power. In this episode, the main character Prime Minister Callow is asked to do a certain act through an

anonymous kidnapping video, in a determined time at four pm that afternoon, in a determined way which is on live television on all British networks, terrestrial and satellite, and also followed by a set of rules. This set of rules, requirements and observation are a part of strategy to exert power and resulting an influence towards the character's behavior. In this case, the kidnapper uploaded an anonymous video using the encrypted internet protocol which means there is zero information left by the kidnapper for anyone to track or to communicate with him. The encrypted internet protocol used to secure the kidnapper's information, hence making the kidnapper invisible. The video uploaded had reached to people's eyes and that it is watched by many people. With YouTube, the video is spread fast online in a very wide range of people because the whole world can see it. Once something is uploaded to the internet, it is difficult to make it vanished. It involves many viewers. It also can not be taken down. This leads to the press media and people opinions. By letting the whole world know about the situation, Prime Minister Callow is not only being observed by the kidnapper but also the public. Prime Minister Callow is not only asked to do an intersexual course with a pig but there are also rules implied and when he did not do according to the rules, there will be consequences.

Power relations exist when there are inequalities, divisions, and disequilibrium (Foucault, 1978). Between two bodies, the inequality, differences or imbalance are two terms which are related but contrary to each other which can be seen in a power relation which is called the binary opposition. This binary opposition can help to understand the power relation because power relation exist when there is imbalance between two things. The binary opposition which is determinant of the positions in power relation can be seen in the power relation's structure. From this

episode, there are two binary oppositions implied: Controlling X Controlled, and Observing X Observed. As according to Foucault (1980), Power must be analyzed as something which circulates, or as something which only functions in the form of a chain as power exists in an act. This suggests that Prime Minister Callow become the target of power and that technology is the component that forms a system that exerts power by creating a system that can able to influence the character's behavior.

2. Power Relation between the Technological Environment and Bing Characterin "Fifteen Million Merits" Episode

In "Fifteen Million Merits" episode, the main character as an individual is named Bingham Madsen who is shortly called as Bing. This episode sets in a labor-like place where everything is surrounded by screens, advanced technologies, and commercials. People are living in their virtual reality using their avatars and they are able to communicate only with the others who also live in the closed facility they live in. Through their screens, they have access to social network using avatars which is called as doppels, talent show, entertainment show, reality show and pornography. These are the only information they can see through their screens and the only information they can get. In this closed facility, some of the people are cleaners who are using yellow uniforms and most of the rest are bikers who wear grey uniforms and pedals to earn merits as a virtual currency. Merits basically essential for their living because what kind of food they can buy, how much toothpaste is depend on their merits. Other than that, in their daily life commercials are common to pop up elsewhere on the screens forcing them to see and they can only skip the video only if they pay using a specific amount of merits. How much merits they have determine how they

live and what they eat. Moreover, there is power exerts in this episode because there is division.

There are different groups of people who are co-existed in this modern environment world. This shows that there are inequality or division in the society. The first one is a group of people who are pedaling on cycles, and facing screens. The second is a group of people who cleans this warehouse-like place where people are pedaling. The two groups has each own identical clothes like a uniform but have different daily-tasks to earn a living. These people lives in a place surrounded by technology in almost all places. Bing's speech in this episode explains that the system and the place makes people becoming a fodder. People are used by the system to collect pedal and collect merits yet never gained anything real. They given the distraction with the screens and commercials which leads to them being used again for the sake of entertainment. He realizes that people are not communicating in a real way because other than they are distracted by the screens, they communicate using doppels. People are not buying real things anymore because the options their given are virtuals. The only way to express themselves is to buy the things that are not real using their virtual money. This shows how dominated, observed and controlled they are and it technologies are the tools and it became the system. The screens are used for entertainment, commercials, doppels, form of communication to distract people from the real world. It forces them to see and there is penalty if they choose not to because it is able to observe. The virtual money or merits determine how much toothpaste they can get, what kind of food they can eat, and basically determines how they would live. All of the technologies which dominated the place they are living in becomes controlling for them. There is binary opposition follows in this episode which are

Dominating x Dominated; Observing x Observed; Controlling x Controlled.

3. Power Relation between the Grain Technology and Liam Character in "The Entire History of You" Episode

In "The Entire History of You" episode, the main character as an individual is a lawyer named Liam Foxwell. This episode sets with a future background when there is a 'grain' technology which almost all people use in the society. The grain technology enables people to record their audiovisual senses. It is implanted in each people's body so that they do not need anymore devices to record what they see and what they hear. The records can be saved, re-played, zoomed in and shared using screens. Grain technology device can be considered as surveillance tool for people to observe or be observed because in this story people's memory or their surveillance gaze can be saved, repeatedly watched, and shared. In this case, the ability of this device started the problem in Liam's marriage life. The constant surveillance is used for a state security but can also be used personally. According to Wilson, Rauwolf, and Bryson (2019) , using AI driven techniques, even with surplus data, humans can still successfully store, reorganize, classify and pick back out the relevant information people require from large data stores. In a contrast, humans biological brains forget (Kraemer and Golding, 1997). However in this story, being able to reach out to past mistakes or points out someone's past life can intensify arguments in marriage which leads to someone's emotional being. The end of the episode shows how Liam was deeply affected after finding out the and watch the affair of his wife.

The ability from the main character to watch re-do of the past leads to an obsessive behavior and then leads to an aggressive behavior. Power exists in an act and must be analyzed as something which circulates (Foucault, 1980). In this story, the ones who

see the re-dos from has the authority to watch one's gaze. Power relations exist when there are inequalities, divisions, and disequilibrium (Foucault, 1978). As according to Bertens (2001), the instrument which the authorities responsible for constant surveillance is binary oppositions where power exerts. In this story, there is binary opposition found which is Observing X Observed. Liam repeatedly watches his memories from his grin before finally chooses to take the grain out from inside of his skin. Grain technology is the tool of surveillance which very advanced because it records on through the eyes of people as long as they see, it records. By this, surveillance reaches wider range of time and space. It can be repeatedly played, and even zoomed into details. It eases people to surveil others. In the story, the files is considered as memories.

4. Disciplinary Technique and Panopticism in "The National Anthem" Episode

In this episode of Black Mirror anthology series, the usage of technology is used as a major component to exert power to control Prime Minister Callow. Without the technology used, the kidnapper will not be able to make his location and information. The advancement of technology in this episode is capable to encrypt an internet protocol, making someone who uses it becomes anonymous. The algorithm of the internet also makes the video spread and watched by many people. It is capable to spread information yet making no one can get information back. In Foucault's view of power, power is not a possession that can be owned or given but it is seen as strategy (Foucault, 1995). The strategy of disciplinary power is to create obedience to aim for discipline bodies. In this episodes, there is disciplinary power applied in order to control the Prime Minister. Hence, it influences Prime Minister Callow's behavior as an individual. As the power relation explained in the previous section, the video uploaded contained a set of

rules regarding the demand of act and there is even punishment if the kidnapper detected a violation against the rule.

Figure 1.
Prime Minister's Callow Gesture towards Alex
00:24:08

The main character's behavior is resulted from the situation when the rules given in the video is not followed. In disciplinary power, punishment is also a part of the strategy. As according to Foucault (1980), the new kind of punishment affects the thoughts, will and inclinations, it is no longer punish the body. The old kind of punishment was trying to punish humans physically, and the new kind of punishment which also exerts in disciplinary power is the kind of punishment that punish the mind of human beings. Disciplinary technique strategy's purpose is to make discipline bodies. After having no solution to the situation and starting to run out of time, Prime Minister Callow completed the video request. In this case, disciplinary power is exercised as a strategy to aim the mission of Prime Minister Callow to do an indecent act. It is exercised in the form of a list of rule which included at the end of the kidnapping video. This list of rule contains prohibition and regulation. Those are the product of power and disciplinary technique which are used in this episode to achieve a certain goal. As according to Foucault (1977), discipline is a set of strategies, procedures and behaviors associated with certain institutional contexts which then

pervades the individual's general thinking and behavior. However, disciplinary power is successfully employed because the impacts from technology is the major component in creating the system.

In the story, the video becomes viral as it is uploaded via encrypted internet protocol as an anonymous video on youtube, and spread throughout the internet. It reaches out to people and make them observe each steps that Prime Minister Callow takes and they give their opinion about each decision made. Not only observed by other people, Prime Minister Callow is also observed by the kidnapper whom he can not be traced. By this, panopticism is used as a way to exercise power in this episode. Panopticism concept is taken from Panopticon prison model where the prisoners inside the cells can not see the supervisor, but they are totally visible to the supervisor. Panopticism carries this idea to modern society whereas in modern society, the practice of surveillance exists. The goal of the panopticon concept is also to create discipline bodies. In this episode, Prime Minister Callow is unable to see, contact or trace the kidnapper. In the other hand, the Prime Minister is being observed because the kidnapper knows when Alex is planning to replace Prime Minister Callow with an actor. However, the act of surveillance in this episode is supported with the usage of technology. By this, Prime Minister Callow can not break the rule given by the kidnapper. Consequently, this can make the Prime Minister being controlled and observed.

5. Disciplinary Technique and Panopticism in "Fifteen Million Merits" Episode

In this episode, the main character as an individual is surrounded with technology. The environment he lives in and the system in the society are dominated with technologies. In the power relation between technological environment and Bing, there is panopticism and disciplinary technique found. In this episode, people are living in a tiny squared rooms surrounded by only screens as the walls and the doors. All of the people are living in the same model of room. The people only meet each other is on the elevator and in the pedal chamber. Eventhough they meet each other in the pedal chamber, they rarely talk because they have to face the screens to power their bikes. They are not communicating to each other directly and use their doppels as a way to communicate. The activity of communicating is using their screens. This implies that the design of the room is too separate them from each other physically. As in panopticon concept, the usage of separated cells design of the prison is to prevent any possible collective attempt of the people who are under surveillance against the order (Foucault, 1995). Moreover, the people are distracted by their virtual reality. This design of the room in this episode is so small and isolating like cells. Other than that, the main character's bedroom is capable to observe him. There is a part from this episode when Bing tried to look away from his bedroom screens and could not escape from it. The technology is able to identify that his eyes are not looking at the screens. This shows that even when Bing is alone, he is being observed because the highly technological environment which surrounds him is capable to be the tool to observe in the system.

Figure 2.
Bing's Gesture towards the Warning
00:41:56

From the figure above, Bing is hiding his face uses his hands. Bing tries to not look at the commercials yet the walls turns red. The body language of hiding the face indicates anxiety and depression (Wallbott, 1998). This implied in the scene when Bing is being warned for penalty because he closes his eyes and not wanting to see the screens. By this picture, we can see that the walls turns red and there is a warning that says 'Resume viewing'. It is even said in the voiceover that 'Portal disabled during commercial'. These indicates that the technology is able to observe because it can immediately gives penalty right away. In this scene, the sound of 'Resume viewing' is voiced over repeatedly followed with a high pitched tone and when Bing open his eyes, all of those disappears. This advanced technology is capable to know whether the person sees the video or not. If skipping the commercial, the person would have to pay a specific amount of merits which will automatically reduced. If the person does not want to lose any merits, then he or she should watch whatever commercial that pops up in their screens. In this case, when Bing closes his eyes, the walls or screens turn red followed with the voice of "Resume Viewing" and then also followed by a high-pitched sound which makes him uncomfortable. These consequences are forcing people to see their screens and there is no escape to this.This practice of warning which forces someone to looks at the screen is a part of punishment in disciplinary strategy. The screens however, i also able to surveil Bing which it can immediately punish. While it will immediately know when someone is not watching the screens, it is invisible. Bing can not see who is actually observe him while the technology do the work of observing. It is in line with the panopticism theory where people are under surveillance yet the position of authority can not be seen by those who are being observed. This makes people who are under surveillance act like they are in the state of being watched because they know they can not lie against the capability of the technology and be self-disciplined. As a strategy to exerts power, panopticism and disciplinary technique is used to control the Bing as an individual in this episode.

6. Panopticism in "The Entire History of You" Episode

The main feature of technology in this episode is grain. The more advanced form of surveillance camera which is implanted in human bodies so that each individual can record everything they see and rewind it. As according to Bauman & Lyon (2013), the purpose of surveillance-based technology is to protect people against threats or for security reasons as this is the main trigger force of modern surveillance. However, in this episode, almost all of the people are using grain. This exceeds the place and time of surveillance. Consequently, each individual has the data of mass people because it records on what the eyes sees.

Figure 3.
Liam is Using Grain
00:24:04

The figure above reveals one of the capability of grain technology. From the figure and the voiceover, we can see Liam watching his re-do an enabling the lip read reconstruction feature. In real life, Liam sees his wife is talking with another man from afar. By using grain, he can

zoomed in into details and this technology is automatically can predict the conversation. This technology is sort of an advanced version of artificial intelligence technology. Liam can have access to see other people actions which includes in his memory. His eyes works as a surveillance tool with the support of grain technology. Each people who uses grain can have access to their own memory files which involves the other people whom they met. Each people can watch the re-dos anytime or anywhere they want without needing to ask for permission. In this sense, the guards in the panopticon concept is replaced by grain which implanted in each individuals. In this episode, Liam is often watch the re-dos of his past memories. Not only watching it, Liam can pause the video, zooming in and share it to other people. By this, he can get the details from the files he has. Other than the individuals, the security also can observe other people. In the airportsecurity check where Liam was passing in, he was asked to show his previous memory files. It is a procedure that people can not say no to. This is a practice of surveillance which is the main essence from panopticism. People are no longer have privacy to people whom they are interacted with because those people have full access to the video in which they meet and get more details. By this, one is aware of the fact that other people who they already meet can surveil the moments with one's involved. This makes people under the state of being watched. Even when someone is not watching re-do, they know that the grain can give access anytime. In this episode, panopticism has successfully exercised because the grain functions as the guards in the panopticon concept as the tool of surveillance. It gives people the ability to practice the act of observing others, and to be observed with others without knowing the observer. Those who are being observed are in total visibility of their actions while the observant is not known.

4. CONCLUSION

Black Mirror presents the story between technology and individuals with complexity to be analyzed. It presents the characters as human beings who undergo through problems and conflicts that occur from the usage of modern technologies and becomes affected. From a sociological perspective a literary work reflects on some sociological aspects. According to Robertson (1981), the basic insight of sociology is that human behavior is shaped by the groups to which people belong and by the social interaction that takes place within those groups. It influences who humans are, and the way human behaves. This series presents a story where technology usage becomes an essential component in human lives. However, human beings have universal basic needs as human beings and social creatures. If the basic human needs are not met, consequently, conflicts will occur. As according to Danesh (2012), competition, structural inequality, revolution, and war are the basic assumptions for modern conflict. Structural inequality leads to a distribution of power. From the results of this study, it illustrates that the modern technologies presented evoke conflict for individuals as human beings through power. The technologies capabilities becomes problematic for the characters as human beings to contain. The results of this study reveal that technology can be the tool of power and can form power relations to individuals. By strategies, power can be employed in order to influence individuals.

Based on the analysis that has been elaborated in the previous chapter, the conclusion can be drawn in line with the statements of the problems in this study. There are several conclusions can be taken. Firstly, the conclusion concerns with the power relations between technology and individuals that are portrayed in the three episodes of

Black Mirror. Secondly, it concerns with they way power is exercised. The results from the analysis in this study found that there are several power relations portrayed in the first season of Black Mirror. The power relations found indicates power relations which exist between technology and individuals as the main characters in Black Mirror anthology series. There are three power relations found. Those are power relation between the internet and the prime minister character, power relation between the technological environment and Bing character and the last is power relation between grain technology and Liam character. From the first power relation, there is power exerts between the main character and the internet as a technology. The internet is capable to create a system to employ power and the main character becomes the aim. The second power relation includes how affected Bing is as the main character from the environmental situation he engages with. The domination of technologies usage causes the strategy of how power is exerts. The main character becomes the aim from the power relation. The last power relation involves the grain technology that is used as a part of the society and each individual to exert power and it is affected Liam as the main character. From all of these power relations, it is found the usage of technology can exerts power and can influence the characters mind, act, and behavior.

Moreover, the results shows that the power of power relations are exercised in some strategies in this series. In power relation between the internet and the prime minister, there are two asymmetric relationships which formed binary oppositions of Controlling X Controlled and Observing X Observed. These binary oppositions is resulted from the exercise of disciplinary technique and panopticism as the exercise of power in this power relation. The second power relation found is power relation between the technological environment and Bing. This power relation uses disciplinary technique and panopticism to exercise power which resulted several binary oppositions which are Dominating X Dominated; Observing X Observed; Controlling X Controlled. The third power relation found is power relation between grain technology and Liam. From this power relation, panopticisim is used as a way to exercise power and enables the practice of surveillance which empowers the asymmetric relationship found which resulted a binary opposition of Observing X Observed. This study included only the concept of power relation and how power can be exercised to influence individuals. Therefore, this study suggests the following future research to explore more about this subject.

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