

CHAPTER 3

Awareness of Child Safety Through 2D Animation

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3.1 INTRODUCTION

The current awareness campaigns on child disappearances in Malaysia primarily rely on traditional methods such as printed materials, social media posts, and community outreach programs. However, these conventional approaches often fail to engage younger audiences effectively, lacking emotional depth and interactive storytelling elements [22]. According to a report by Bukit Aman, 1,509 cases of missing children and teenagers were recorded in Malaysia between 2020 and 2022, with unresolved cases highlighting the urgency of addressing this issue [23].

Studies have shown that as a form of digital storytelling, animation can be a powerful tool for raising awareness and fostering empathy, making complex social issues more accessible and

impactful [24]. However, existing awareness animations often focus on general safety education and do not specifically address the psychological trauma and societal impact of child disappearances [25]. Therefore, there is a need to develop a purposefully designed 2D animation, “*Echoes of The Last*”, that integrates horror storytelling elements to enhance emotional engagement and effectively convey the urgency of child safety awareness. This animation aims to bridge the gap in awareness strategies by utilizing a visually compelling narrative to educate and emotionally connect with audiences, particularly young people and families, encouraging proactive safety measures.

3.1.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this study is to identify the key content and messaging required to raise awareness about child disappearances and their root causes, and to develop a 2D horror animation with a compelling narrative that emotionally engages and educates viewers on this issue. Additionally, the study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the animation by measuring its impact on audience understanding, emotional engagement, and motivation to adopt preventive actions.

3.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.2.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE REVIEW

This section has reviewed literature on the application of animated narratives and young children's disappearance, combined with mental trauma, which primarily seeks to connect understanding for both youth and their families in whatever way. Three areas of focus were examined from 2005 - 2024, including psychology, media studies, and education, within the scope of youth behaviour, trauma representation, and media engagement in both global and Southeast Asian contexts. The objective of this literature review was to find the gaps in either the use of creative media that addresses children's emotional awareness in partnership with previous horror animation, or stewardship through collective responsibility for community safety.

Young adults are between the ages of 16 and 25, and they are in a unique period of emotional and social identity formation [26]. The media shapes the emotional coping strategies and emotional connections to children and also influences their empathy. In terms of studies, there is evidence that emotional narratives create more empathetic responses in young viewers. For example, Nabi and Krcmar (2004) found that emotionally impactful narratives allow young viewers to make stronger connections to social issues [27]. Likewise, horror-based narratives serve as metaphors of real-life fears and traumas in society, and allow for contemplation and awareness [28].

The existing literature validates that storytelling, particularly with an emotional component- horror, can enhance awareness and empathy in young adults. However, animation is still under-researched in this context, and there exists no research to date to examine real-world social trauma through animation. Moreover, existing literature does not consider how symbols in horror contribute to emotional processing and preventive attitudes. While there are campaigns to promote child safety, few use animation, and even fewer use animation from a horror perspective to investigate the psychosocial and societal impacts of child disappearance. Also, there is little research conducted about how horror animation and other forms of media can be utilized by educators, parents, and advocates of mental health for promoting emotional awareness and collective culpability.

This review is based on Uses and Gratifications Theory [29]. This theory looks at how people actively seek out media that meets their emotional and informational needs. It also considers Media Effects Theory, particularly cultivation theory, which examines how long-term exposure to media narratives influences public perception [30]. The project also uses trauma theory in media [31]. It investigates how narrative and symbolic imagery help audiences deal with real-life trauma through mediated experiences.

Table 3.1: Survey Result

Soalan	Skala	1	2	3	4	5
Saya rasa penting untuk mengajar anak-anak tentang "Keselamatan diri sendiri"		-	3.8%	-	-	96.2%
Ibu bapa/ penjaga bertanggungjawab untuk sentiasa memantau pergerakan anak mereka		-	3.8%	-	3.8%	92.3%
Media sosial boleh menjadi tempat yang berbahaya untuk kanak-kanak jika tidak dipantau		-	3.8%	-	7.7%	

Based on the survey results in table 3.1, the majority of respondents strongly agreed on the importance of teaching children about personal safety, with 96.2% selecting the highest scale. Similarly, 92.3% agreed that parents or guardians are responsible for monitoring their children's movements. Additionally, 88.5% believed that social media can be dangerous for children if left unsupervised. These findings highlight a strong awareness among respondents regarding child safety, justifying the development of a horror-based animation aimed at both educating and entertaining young audiences. The following section outlines the research objectives and methodology used to assess the animation's impact.

3.3 METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the methods, tools, and creative processes used in the development of the 2D animated short film "*Echoes of The Last*". It covers the entire production pipeline, beginning with research and concept development, followed by design and animation production, and concluding with post-production and evaluation stages. Both creative and analytical approaches were applied to ensure the animation effectively delivers its intended message on child disappearance awareness.

3.3.1 RESEARCH PHASE

Based on observations from various websites, recent news reports, and films that address real-life cases of missing children, we noticed that many awareness efforts often lack emotional depth or fail to resonate with younger audiences. These sources highlighted the recurring patterns and root causes behind child disappearances, such as lack of supervision, online predators, and breakdowns in family communication. Observed that while some films and media attempt to portray these issues, they are often too dramatized or fail to provide practical lessons. This inspired us to create a 2D horror animation that not only captures the emotional weight of these stories but also serves as an educational tool to raise awareness and promote preventive action in a more engaging and relatable way.

3.3.2 PRE-PRODUCTION

(a) STORYBOARD

Translating the script into visual thumbnails to plan shot composition, camera angles, and pacing. As seen in the storyboard sketches, focused on tension-building scenes such as the protagonist discovering clues, experiencing hallucinations, and confronting the shadow figure. These boards helped solidify the emotional beats and suspenseful moments of the narrative. developed the story through iterative scripting, refining the narrative based on peer feedback. Storyboards were created using ClipStudio, which helped in pacing and shot composition illustrate from figure 3.1.

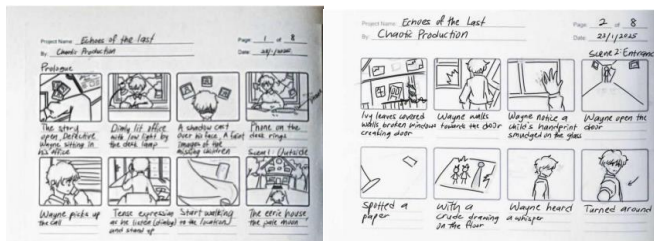


Figure 3.1: Some of the storyboard page

(b) **SCRIPTING**

The script for “*Echoes of The Last*” Script was crafted to explore the emotional trauma of loss, guilt, and redemption through a psychological horror lens. By centering the story around a father-detective haunted by his missing daughter, the narrative brings a deep emotional core to the horror elements. The use of an abandoned house as the main setting enhances the eerie atmosphere while symbolizing forgotten pain and buried truths. Following figure 3.2 in the sample of the script.

Echoes of The Last Prologue (The story opens with Detective Wayne Gail sitting in his dimly lit office at night, surrounded by a cluttered desk filled with missing persons reports and a worn-out photograph of a young girl—his daughter, Emily. The headlines scattered across his desk read: “Children Missing in Town” and “Community Faces Fear as Search Continues.” Wayne’s eyes linger on his daughter’s photo, a mix of longing and guilt washing over him.) (Wayne takes a deep breath and flips through the cold case files. His daughter had been missing for years, lost among the countless emotional disappointments. The authorities had long moved on, but Wayne never did. He suspects the case, driven by a desperate hope that this new lead might bring him closer to the truth.) (Phone rings. Wayne answers, his grip tight on the receiver as if it might anchor him to reality.) Phone Call: “Detective Gail, we’ve got something. An abandoned house on the outskirts of town. Locals have seen strange lights and heard noises. We need you to investigate this place. I’ll send you the location.” Wayne: “Understood.” (Wayne ends the call. He stares at his daughter’s photo. His expression hardens. He closes the case file, slipping his daughter’s photo into his coat pocket. Determined, he gathers his notes and steps into the night, his silhouette swallowed by the darkness as he heads toward the forgotten house—hoping, this time, he might find answers.)	Scene 1 – Outside The Abandoned House (Wayne arrived at the old, decaying mansion under a pale moon. The house is covered in ivy and ivy, with broken windows and doors hanging off their hinges. The surrounding area is eerily quiet, with only the rustling of the trees in the wind.) (Wayne approaches the door, noticing children’s handprints smeared in the dirt. Pushing the door open, it creaks loudly as he steps inside. The air inside is thick and stale, the dim light from his flashlight casting long, warped shadows against the peeling wallpaper.) Wayne: “Hello?” (His voice echoes through the empty halls, swallowed by the darkness. Wayne’s footsteps are slow and deliberate, each step causing the old wooden floorboards to groan under his weight. The house feels alive, as if it’s holding its breath, waiting.) (Wayne tightens his grip on his flashlight, his eyes darting to every corner. The faint sound of a child’s giggle drifts through the air, sending a chill down his spine. He pauses, heart pounding, before pressing deeper into the house.) Scene 2 – The Entrance Hall (The entrance hall is dark and cold, with discarded toys and old furniture covered in dust-laden sheets. The air is thick with the scent of decay, and the wooden floor groans under Wayne’s weight as he steps further inside. He sweeps his flashlight across the room, illuminating a wall with faded posters of missing children. His breath catches when he notices something more disturbing—a crude drawing of a screaming figure surrounded by small, featureless children.)
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Figure 3.2: Some of the skrip page

(c) **CHARACTER DESIGN**

Developed the main character, Detective Wayne Gail, based on emotions and experiences that many individuals have faced—loss, regret, and guilt. Wayne is a dedicated detective who neglected his responsibilities as a father, which tragically led to the disappearance of his own child due to his carelessness. His character reflects the internal conflict between duty and family, serving as a symbol and reminder for parents to be more vigilant and present in their children’s lives. His personal failure and

negligence form the core themes of awareness and accountability explored in this animation. Below shows to the sample of character in figure 3.3.



Figure 3.3: The Character_Detective Wayne Gail

(d) **STYLE FRAMES**

This animation was used to establish the overall visual mood, color palette, and atmosphere of the project. Chose a minimalist and shadow-heavy art style to reflect the psychological horror genre. Soft yet muted colors were used to evoke emotions such as sadness, tension, and mystery. Utilized digital animation software such as Adobe Animate from figure 3.4 to ensure consistency in design and background composition across each shot.

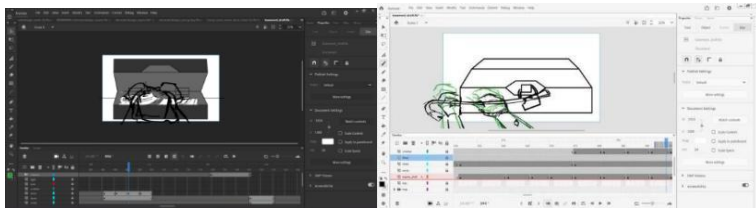


Figure 3.4: Some of the animation processes

(e) **ANIMATICS**

This is a rough version of our animation, arranged based on the storyboard and initial audio. It helped us test the tempo, pacing,

and transitions between scenes before moving on to full animation. Based on figure 3.5 animatic, it focused on the main character's expressions, key dialogue displays, and basic camera movements to convey the emotions and sustained tension throughout the story.

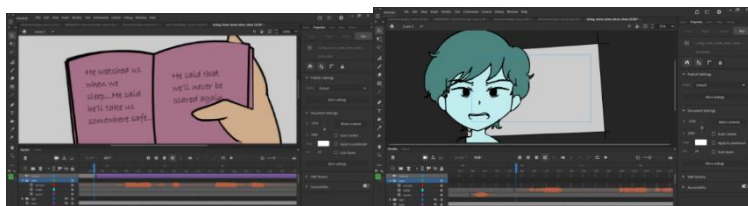


Figure 3.5: Character expression

3.3.3 PRODUCTION PROCESS

(a) ANIMATION TECHNIQUE USED

The animation was created using frame-by-frame techniques in Adobe Animate software. Scenes were composited in After Effects. Each shot followed a structured workflow: rough sketch → clean lineart → coloring → shading → compositing.

(b) SOFTWARE AND TOOLS

Utilized Adobe Animate as the primary software to bring our 2D animation to life, allowing us to craft smooth character movements, detailed scene transitions, and emotionally impactful visuals that aligned with the horror-themed narrative of our project. Used Audacity to record and edit sound and voice record. Lastly, used Media Climpchamp to attached all clips and Adobe Premiere Pro and put effect in the final product.

3.3.4 POST-PRODUCTION

The original sound for the animation was recorded using Audacity, allowing for clear voice capture and sound editing. This included voice acting, ambient sounds, and emotional cues such as

breathing, tension, and silence, which are crucial in psychological horror. Each line was carefully timed to match the mood and pacing of the scene.

After the audio was finalized, it was imported and synced in Adobe Premiere Pro during the editing phase. Premiere Pro was used to align the voice tracks with the visuals, ensuring smooth transitions and emotional rhythm throughout the animation. Sound effects and background music were layered strategically to build suspense and enhance key emotional moments. The final edit brought together the visuals and audio seamlessly, creating a cohesive emotional arc that guides the viewer through the story's tension, sorrow, and message of awareness.

3.4 CONCLUSION

The animated was design and developer followed a structured creative process that combined research, concept development, and production techniques, integrating both artistic intuition and technical precision. From early research and storyboarding to animation and post-production, each stage was carefully designed to support the emotional and thematic goals of *"Echoes of The Last"*. This approach ensured that the final animation not only delivered a compelling horror narrative but also effectively raised awareness about the serious issue of child disappearances through a strong visual and emotional experience.