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Digital Literacy in The Family (Case Study of Restricting Youtube Use in Children)

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: *digital literacy; parental mediation; parental communication; media regulation; YouTube*

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed media consumption patterns within families, particularly among children. YouTube, as one of the most widely accessed video platforms for children, offers a vast array of educational content. However, it also presents risks such as digital addiction, exposure to inappropriate content, and potential disruptions to children's social and emotional development. Therefore, this study aims to analyze how parents manage their children's YouTube usage through parental mediation strategies to optimize its role as a learning tool. This research employs a qualitative descriptive method with a case study approach, gathering data through in-depth interviews with three families whose children, aged 6–12 years, actively use YouTube. The findings reveal that parents implement three primary parental mediation strategies: active mediation (open discussions about the content children consume), restrictive mediation (strict regulations on screen time and content access), and co-use mediation (direct parental supervision to ensure content safety). The study further indicates that each family adopts different communication patterns influenced by parental availability, children's level of openness, and the effectiveness of imposed regulations. Parents who consistently engage in active mediation foster children's critical awareness, enabling them to independently select educational content. Meanwhile, restrictive mediation, when applied consistently, effectively limits screen time but often faces resistance from children, who tend to negotiate for extended viewing time. Co-use mediation proves to be the most effective approach for controlling content quality, yet it requires a high level of parental involvement, which is often constrained by time constraints. Moreover, the study identifies several challenges in implementing parental mediation, including limited parental availability for supervision, difficulties in maintaining rule consistency, and children's emotional resistance to YouTube restrictions. However, the findings suggest that with open communication, active parental engagement, and consistent enforcement of rules, parents can cultivate healthy media consumption habits among children. Consequently, this study underscores the crucial role of digital literacy within families in balancing the educational benefits of YouTube while mitigating its potential negative impacts in the digital era.

1. Introduction

In the era of globalization, technological advancements have been felt by all layers of society. One manifestation of technological development is the creation of gadgets. (Hidayatuladkia et al., 2021) The rapid development of technology has influenced all aspects of life, including the realm of education. Even the significant influence can be seen from technology, which is increasingly considered one of the necessities that must be fulfilled in human life today. (Sisbintari & Setiawati, 2021) With the development of today's technology, anything and anyone far away will be closer if connected to the internet. The internet is known for its superiority in bringing together various people, regardless of geographical conditions, which will not be a limiting factor. The video-based social

media frequently accessed on smartphones is YouTube. Most people perceive that YouTube is an application that requires everyone to have an account to freely access the application; this has become a basic need for everyone of various ages, from parents who already have grandchildren to even young children who become addicted to watching YouTube videos, whether downloaded online or offline, and some watch films via live streaming. YouTube has unlimited access available in almost 88 countries with a variety of languages, making it particularly appealing to children. (Noor et al., 2020).

There are several screen time limits recommended for children using digital media, as stated by the APP (American Academy of Pediatrics), which is 2 hours per day. Children aged 6-12 years are given a screen time limit of 2 hours per day. This screen time determination is based on research conducted in the United States titled "Challenges, Risks, and Benefits of Digital Media Use for Parents and Children" in 2016. (Mascheroni et al., 2018) Children aged 6-12 years are at risk of being disturbed by online media because this age is still unstable and vulnerable or not yet ready. (Livingstone et al., 2019) Some parents consider that children using technology is a beneficial thing. However, at the age of 6-12 years, it is an age that is likely to receive many external factors that can influence increased exposure to digital media. (Supartiwi et al., 2020)

The freedom to access YouTube presents a unique challenge for parents, as they must be able to set rules for how long children are allowed to watch YouTube. Weighing the pros and cons of introducing gadgets to children ultimately depends on the parents' readiness to introduce and supervise what children access. Parents need to implement several rules for children when viewing YouTube content so that they can utilize it effectively and responsibly.

Based on the description of the background of the problem above, the problem formulation in this research is: How is the communication process of parents towards children in optimizing the use of YouTube as a learning medium? Based on the problem formulation above, the researcher can formulate the research objective, namely: To find out how the communication process of parents towards children in optimizing the use of YouTube as a learning medium.

Literature Review

Digital Literacy of Parents to Children

In several families, negotiations about media usage become a topic that is always discussed between children and parents. Although in some children it appears that the rules about media usage (TV and other media) from parents have been well internalized. The theory of parental mediation argues that parents use different interpersonal communication strategies in their efforts to mediate and reduce the negative impact of media in their children's lives (Clark, 2011). In understanding the role of parents in accompanying children, the concept of the theory regarding Parental Mediation Theory. This theory explains three different mediation strategies, including:

a. Active Mediation

Active Mediation means that parents discuss with their children about the content that children see in the media. In active mediation, the importance of dialogue between parents and their children is evident with the presence of family members together. Parents who engage in active mediation increase by providing explanations to children, which will have a positive effect regarding the media.

b. Restrictive Mediation

Restrictive Mediation, or parents can also determine or create rules regarding media usage as well as the use of smartphones or gadgets together through conversation (Clark, 2011, p. 326). Restrictive Mediation involves communication between parents and children in making rules or policies for media usage as well. Gadget, but if the agreed-upon rules are not followed, there will be consequences or punishments that the child will receive.

Co-Use Mediation

Co-use mediation or shared use is a type when parents and children together view or use media together. The technical mediation type shows parents' efforts to filter and control the content consumed by children through various sets of technical actions (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008). When applied to the context of media in general, co-viewing is a situation where parents and children access a media together, but do not have the purpose or focus to discuss specific content. By habituating and providing limitations in the use of digital technology by parents to children, it is also hoped to realize skills in using digital technology wisely by young children and to protect children from the negative impacts of YouTube shows watched by children. Therefore, there is a need for the role of parents in introducing digital literacy to young children so that children can be wiser in accessing digital sites so that the optimization process of learning through YouTube media is well controlled. (Handayani, 2022)

Family Systems Theory

This theory proposes that families cannot be understood as a collection of separate individuals, but rather as an interconnected emotional system, where each member influences and is influenced by other members. This theory emphasizes the relationships and behavioral patterns among family members that are transmitted from generation to generation (Haefner, 2014).

According to Fitzpatrick and Ascan Koerner, there are two main variables in family communication patterns, namely conversation and conformity. Fitzpatrick (1988) identifies four types of families: (1) consensual; (2) pluralistic; (3) protective; and (4) laissez-faire. Each of these family types has a type determined by parents based on how they use space, time, and energy, as well as their degree of expressing feelings and use of power.

First, the consensual type is a family that very often engages in conversation but also has high obedience. Second, the pluralistic type is a family that very often engages in conversation but has low obedience. Third, the protective type is a family that rarely engages in conversation but has high obedience, so there are many obedient attitudes in the family even though family members rarely communicate. Fourth, the laissez-faire type is a family that rarely engages in conversation and has a low level of obedience. (Mohamad Permana & Suzan, 2023).

2. Method

This research discusses how the role of parents in supervising and limiting gadget use among children. The researcher uses a qualitative descriptive method. This research, conducted with a qualitative approach, aims "to find solutions to a problem with these steps; anyone using the same method for the same object will obtain the same results" (Nurdin & Hartati, 2019). Therefore, the primary data needed consists of interview results with informants. In this research, the data analysis technique used is by collecting data through interviews with sources and literature studies. The object of this research is the communication between parents and children regarding gadget use. Meanwhile, the subjects of this research are parents who have children aged 6-12 years and use YouTube as their viewing platform. The subjects were selected based on several criteria, including: being active in using YouTube as their child's viewing content, and residing in Komplek Lapan. The sampling technique used in this research is purposive sampling by selecting sample data based on the needs for the research. In the validity test used in this research, triangulation of sources is employed to analyze the truth of the collected data sources. This technique is used by researchers to ensure the accuracy of the data obtained. Source triangulation is used by combining data from research subjects with data and comparing data from one informant with another.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Presenting the Results

3.1.1 Introduction of Digital Media to Children

The research results show that children from the three families of informants were introduced to digital media, especially YouTube, at ages between 4.5 to 6 years. The main reason parents introduce digital media is to support children's learning and to introduce technology from an early age. The first family actively chooses educational content such as children's songs and educational animations, reflecting the application of active mediation. The second family combines active and restrictive mediation, with the reason that the child should not fall behind in technological development and to gain additional learning material. Meanwhile, the third family emphasizes strict accompaniment (co-use mediation) with the reason that the child remains under supervision while accessing educational content on YouTube. In general, the three families show a high awareness of the importance of supervision and content filtering from the early stages of introducing digital media.

3.1.2 Regulation of YouTube Usage Time

Every family has different policies in regulating the duration of watching YouTube. The first family limits it to a maximum of 2 hours per day with direct supervision. The second family sets a duration of about 3 hours per day that includes study and entertainment time, while still prohibiting age-inappropriate content. The third family implements a strict time limit of a maximum of 2 hours per day and does not allow usage without parental supervision. All three families apply a form of restrictive mediation in time limitations, and the children's responses are generally obedient, although they occasionally show resistance. This indicates that the application of consistent rules accompanied by clear communication plays an important role in the effectiveness of parental mediation.

3.1.3 Parental Supervision Strategies

In terms of supervision, the three families apply different approaches. The first family practices co-use mediation by accompanying directly or being in the same room. The second family is more flexible by conducting periodic checks (active mediation) but acknowledges limitations because the child is not always open. Meanwhile, the third family implements strict supervision and does not tolerate usage without permission, but faces challenges in the form of the child's discomfort due to restrictions that are perceived as too strict. These three supervision patterns show that despite obstacles such as time, the child's openness, and minor conflicts, parents continue to strive to apply mediation forms that suit their respective family situations.

3.1.4 Parents' Perceptions of YouTube

All informants are aware that YouTube has positive and negative impacts. On one hand, educational content on YouTube is considered effective in helping children learn to read, count, recognize colors, and understand school lessons more engagingly. However, on the other hand, all three acknowledge the risks such as gadget addiction, consumption of age-inappropriate content, and rule violations when supervision weakens. These findings reinforce Clark's (2011) concept of parental mediation that active and consistent parental involvement is crucial in optimizing the benefits of digital media while minimizing the risks involved.

3.2. Discussion

1.   This research shows that family communication strategies in limiting YouTube usage for children can be identified through the approach of parental mediation, namely active mediation, restrictive mediation, and co-use mediation. These three approaches appear variably in daily family practices and have significant implications for children's digital literacy. First, the active mediation strategy is evident from parents' efforts to establish open communication with children regarding the digital content they consume. The second family actively engages in discussions with their child to evaluate and assess the content of YouTube. This finding aligns with the research of Rohmatulloh & Istiyanto (2018) and Iskandar et al. (2022), which emphasizes that active communication can enhance children's ability to filter educational content and develop a critical attitude towards digital media. Secondly, the strategy of restrictive mediation is strictly applied by the first family through time restrictions and close supervision of the types of content. This approach is effective in minimizing the risk of digital addiction and exposure to inappropriate content, as also stated by Wulandari et al. (2021). Consistency in the application of rules is key to the success of this approach. Thirdly, the strategy of co-use mediation appears dominant in the third family, which accompanies the child directly while watching YouTube. This approach not only prevents negative risks but also strengthens emotional bonds through intense interaction. This is supported by Aresti et al. (2023), who state that co-use can create emotional closeness while providing education through shared experiences.

2.   The three families that are the subjects of this research exhibit characteristics of a pluralistic family based on Fitzpatrick's family communication orientation theory, namely families with high conversation intensity and low conformity levels. In pluralistic families, children are given the freedom to express their opinions and are involved in decision-making, including in choosing YouTube content. However, parents still play an active role in guiding and evaluating their children's decisions through open communication. Nevertheless, challenges remain, particularly regarding parents' time limitations in accompanying their children. Inconsistency in rule application due to emotional conditions or time constraints can disrupt family communication stability. Therefore, the effectiveness of parental mediation strategies is greatly influenced by consistency, flexibility, and parents' ability to maintain emotional closeness and build adaptive communication. Thus, a synergistic and sustainable approach to parental mediation can be a crucial key in shaping strong and character-driven digital literacy in children in today's digital media era.

4. Conclusion

   The advancement of technology today makes it easier for all groups to access various information that we need as well as information that can be viewed through YouTube. For children aged 6 to 12 years, the content available on YouTube is generally, it is very entertaining for them. The supervision carried out by parents when children use smartphones is in the form of accompanying them while using it, by watching content together with the child and monitoring their viewing history. Diverting the child's attention from the smartphone is one of the efforts to prevent the child from becoming dependent on that digital technology. Parents must also filter content that is appropriate for the child's age, choosing which content is allowed and not allowed for the child to watch. Establishing strict rules and exercising control is also one form of supervision that parents carry out over their children so that the child can still be managed in using the smartphone and also use it according to their needs.

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