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Digital Literacy at Pornographic Content and Parent's Assistance of Early Childhood

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Abstract

The use of gadgets in the pandemic era is unavoidable. Distance learning system makes children from an early age to the final-year age use gadgets and online media as a means of information and education. Unfortunately, the data shows that children are accidentally exposed to and susceptible to pornographic content in online media. This makes children need communication and parental assistance in accessing online media. This research was conducted in Semarang private school as a form of community dedication for parents who have an early child. The theory used in this study is the theory of family communication patterns and parental mediation theory. The research method used is mixed methods. The results of this study indicate that parents give their children access to gadgets by giving them screen time. Every respondent also felt concerned about pornographic content. They stated that there is a need for assistance when early childhood access gadgets. Communication in the form of conversation and active mediation between parents and children is a form of parental communication in preventing exposure to pornographic content in online media.

Keywords: Digital literacy, pornographic content, parental communication, early childhood

Introduction

This time, digital media has become a part of everyday life for children. It is challenging to separate children and adolescents from digital media. The development of technology has made the lives of teenagers integrated with digital media. Children and adolescents' curiosity become parents' concern for providing their children with digital access. The media have positive and negative impacts. The expected positive impact of the information technology presence is education and entertainment media and easy access to information for teenagers. Unfortunately, the presence of information technology also has negative impacts. Quickly accessing information increases the risk of adolescents accessing information inappropriate for their consumption, such as violence, pornography, horror, and so on. Parents agree that the presence of information technology is unsafe for children and adolescents if they use it.

A survey conducted by APJII (Association of Indonesian Internet Service Providers) shows that children aged 10-14 have accessed the internet. "Interestingly, this survey found that 100% of children aged 10-14 have accessed the internet," said Henri at a press conference in Jakarta. The internet is a new life that can touch various spheres of the world, and the scope of life is

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easy and quick. So, when talking about the internet, it is a broad realm. On the one hand, this condition gives an easiness. Still, on the other hand, primarily when children use the internet through social media and do not get reasonable assistance from parents, it will strongly warn against sad internet use among children. This kind of internet use shows an alarming condition, especially the anxiety felt by parents. The average respondent (76.4%) believes the internet is unsafe for children to access (Islahuddin, 2016)

According to research from ECPAT Indonesia, in 2017, there was a distorted reality in six regencies/cities because children were exposed to pornographic content, which they easily accessed through their gadgets. KPAI also found new facts and has recorded that 97 percent of 4,500 junior and senior high school students access pornographic content. This number occurred in 12 cities (Khalifah & Bimo, 2018).

Even more surprising is that in 2021, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KPPPA) also showed the latest facts that 66.6 percent of male children and 62.3 percent of female children also plunged into watching pornographic content. Worse, they can easily access the content or get it through online media. The data was obtained based on the results of the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Life Experiences (SNPHR), as presented by Robert Parlindungan S, Assistant Deputy for Child Services at the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KPPPA) (Dhafintya, 2021).

Without realizing it or not, children are the most vulnerable targets to be influenced by the content of information in the media. Online media indirectly affects children, so children will receive that basic information and consider it natural.

Children at a very early age are now exposed to using gadgets in their daily lives. It is crucial for parents to understand how to assist their children to only access safe content and child-friendly duration because avoiding technology such as gadgets in parenting in today's era is difficult.

Quickly accessing the internet and the increasingly rapid development of technology provide new concerns for parents, especially those with children, in protecting them from the harmful effects of the development of information technology in the internet media. Accessing information through the internet media is something that needs to be considered by parents. The role of parental assistance is essential in directing children to access and consume information through the media. For this reason, parents must always be aware of how to accompany their children to consume safe internet content. This study aims to demonstrate the digital literacy ability of parents in assisting their children in the context of the use of social media in children.

Methods

This research used combined or mixed methods. Research with mixed methods combines qualitative and quantitative approaches (Creswell, 2010). Mix methods are also used in research to find more valid and comprehensive data because the data is in the form of numbers or graphs supported by explanations through words (Sugiyono, 2011). Thus, the technique of collecting data in this study was distributing questionnaires to 55 parents from a private school in Semarang who had children with an age

range from grade six in elementary school to grade three in junior high school. Then, those questionnaires are reviewed based on the theories and concepts used. Determining the number of respondents referred to Roscoe's assumption that the appropriate sample size was 30-500 (Sugiyono, 2009).

Results & Discussion

Media literacy, according to Aufderheide (1992) (in Koltay, 2011: 212), identifies as a movement, which is designed to help in understanding, then know about how to produce and negotiate meaning in culture, images, words, and sounds.

> *"A person's knowledge of media literacy – the ability to decode, evaluate, analyze, and produce both print and electronic media. The fundamental goal of media literacy is the important autonomous relationship for all media. The emphasis in media literacy training ranges widely, including citizenship information, aesthetic appreciation and expression, social advocacy, self-esteem, and consumer competence." (Aufderheide, 1992)*

According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (2018), digital literacy is the ability to use information and communication technology (ICT). Those are used to find, evaluate, utilize, create, and communicate content or information using cognitive, ethical, social, emotional, and aspects of social or technical skills.

This understanding of media literacy can be seen in how parents provide internet access to their children. The results of the questionnaires conducted on 55 parents showed that they gave access to their children and they accompanied their children to access the gadget. As shown in figure 1, most respondents allow their children to use gadgets. However, parents still accompany

their children using gadgets, as shown in figure 2.

Figure 1. Parental permission for children to access gadgets.

Figure 2. Parents assisting their children in accessing gadgets.

From the data regarding parental assistance, one of the efforts to assist children was made by establishing good interactions between parents and children. The interaction is through a harmonious communication process. Communication provides comfort for children so they can understand their parent's statements.

Arnett (2007) explains that there are two models in media literacy. The first model is the protectionist inoculation model; education media try to inhibit access to media content, which is considered dangerous, especially for children. The protectionist model for education media promotes strategies for critical viewing and increases parental control over the media to children.

The second model is the open-access model. The open-access model in media literacy considers the importance of individuals' and groups' enjoyment in using media, with the belief that audiences, including children, deliberately negotiate meaning and are aware that media is constructed. The open-access model aims to promote media literacy education through solid freedom of expression and emphasizes broad access to media as the foundation of a democratic society. The model supports limited access to tools, content, and distribution, with implications for related legal and policy issues such as copyright, systematic media rating, media ownership, and media community formation.

The main concepts that can be conveyed to children in media education are as follows (Arnett, 2007). 1) Messages are constructions. The message results from the construction that the media is not a simple reflection of external reality. Media messages are the result of very carefully created as result of several external considerations and determinants. 2) Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules. Media messages use a system of symbols, music, narration, and digital processing to cause specific effects on their viewers. 3) Audience actively interprets messages. People construct meaning when they consume media. Message interpretation varies depending on individual factors, such as developmental level, personal needs, etc. 4) The media have embedded values and points of view. Explicitly or implicitly, the media expresses certain ideologies by displaying specific perspectives, values, and attitudes in their broadcast. 5) Media have commercial implications and exist within an economic context. Media literacy aims to provide awareness of how media content

considerations of commercial, political, and other interests are influenced.

Parents use interpersonal communication with different strategies to reduce the negative effects of media in children's daily life. With various kinds of children's behavior, Parental Mediation Theory uses positive ways using deliberate mediation to reduce the negative impact on children's development. Mediation strategies include Active Mediation. Active Meditation means that parents talk to their children about the content their children see in the media. Then, Restrictive Mediation or Limited Mediation. Restrictive Meditation means parents can also determine or make rules through conversation regarding media and smartphones or gadgets their children use (Clark, 2011).

Active Mediation emphasizes dialogue between parents and their children with the presence of family members. Restrictive Mediation or Limited Mediation involves more communication between parents and children in making regulations or policies regarding media and gadgets their children use. The child will receive consequences or penalties if the agreed rules are not followed.
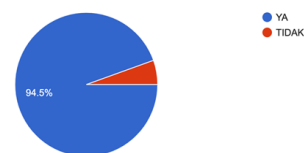

Figure 3. Parents know their children's gadget access.

When parents were asked whether they gave their children access to social media, they had quite different percentages of answers, as shown in figure 3. It can be interpreted that with this Active Mediation, parents

can explain well according to the criteria for a comfortable family chat or discussion. Parents can provide good instructions to their children. If a discussion between parents and children makes both parties comfortable, the child will be open to whatever.

Figure 4. Children's accesses to social media

As shown in Figure 4, about 50% of parents allow their children to access social media. Parents have an important role in their children as teachers, guides, mentors, companions, and role models. Children and parents should have effective communication aims to create a harmonious relationship. According to Shochib 2010 (in Ayun and Hedi, 2021), some forms of effective communication include: (1). The ability of parents to convey things to their children will make them understand and realize what parents feel and want so children are easy to follow; (2). The ability of parents to listen to their children reflectively will help them read, understand, and realize what they are doing so they are aware of changing their wrong actions and optimizing good behavior; (3). The ability of parents to accept their children's feelings means that they have been able to understand their world; (4). The ability of parents to communicate with humor, especially when the child is experiencing anxiety, will be able to return the child to a normal condition and ready to receive moral values from parents. From these four things, we can see that it is

important for parents to understand their children, especially in early childhood (PAUD), where they still really need the role, example, and communication from their parents in assisting them in everything.

The concern of parents about their children accessing digital media regarding pornographic content can be overcome by implementing effective communication in the Family Communication Pattern. Family Communication Model Theory explains that a family is the one that creates a shared social reality. The facts in people's lives are a form of social reality. Departing from this social reality, it becomes the basis for the growth of social construction. Social construction is influenced by agreement, interaction, and social habits. Interaction or communication is an essential part of a family. Family communication patterns contain two main variables. There are Conversation and Conformity (Koerner & Mary Anne, 2002).

Figure 5. Social media content accessed by children

The conversation is when all family members are encouraged to participate in making conversations on various topics. Here all family members are free and will spontaneously interact with each other without any limitations in terms of time spent or discussed topics. Figure 5 describes social media that children widely access.

The uniformity of beliefs or attitudes defines conformity. We can see conformity from the rules set in the family. Usually, parents in the family play an essential role in making or determining rules given to their children. Besides this, conformity can also be seen in the equal distribution of attention between one family member and another. For example, a father or mother must be equal when dividing attention between their first and second child. In this case, it means reducing jealousy between family members. Conversation and conformity are usually made to avoid conflict and to have mutual values that each other needs.

The following data shows how worried parents are when their early children access pornographic content on social media.

Pernahkan anda khawatir dengan konten pornografi pada saat anak anda mengakses meida internet?
55 responses

Figure 6. Pornographic content concern in early childhood.

Almost all parents feel worried about accessing online media regarding the sudden emergence of pornographic content when children access internet media, as shown in figure 6. Davidson 2012 in Munawar et al. (2019) shows that children need parental assistance to use social media wisely. Thus, ability to access the internet for positive needs, parents are required to have the ability and skills to assist their children in accessing the internet. These skills are technical, knowledge, and emotional when using the internet. It further emphasizes that parental assistance is needed when children use internet media at home.

Hasugian (2017) says that it is necessary to build digital literacy. Here are the steps; First, increasing parental knowledge (parents are aware of sites that provide benefits for family members). Second, there is a commitment to healthy digital technology, where parents make rules that are obeyed together when accessing online media. Third, provide a variety of recreational activities, so digital technology is one of many options. Fourth is increasing public awareness, where norms and ethics are needed in the digital world, like in the real world.

Conclusion

The ease of accessing the internet and the increasingly rapid development of technology provide new concerns for parents, especially those with children, in protecting them from the adverse effects of the times, computers, tablets, cellphones, and laptops through internet media. Access to information through the internet is something that parents need to pay attention to. The role of parental assistance is essential in directing children to access and consume information through the media. For this reason, parents must be aware of how to assist their children to always consume safe content from the internet.

The results of this study indicate that parents give their children access to gadgets by giving them screen time. Every respondent also felt concerned about pornographic content. They stated that there is a need for assistance when early childhood access gadgets. Communication in the form of conversations and active mediation between parents and children is a form of parental communication in preventing exposure to pornographic content in online media.

For effective communication, it is necessary to have a conversation between parents and children. Hermoyo (2015) explains that several things must be considered to communicate effectively in early childhood, such as abilities, language, parents' attitudes, and the place when having these conversations.

From the concepts presented above and the research that has been done, there are several recommendations given in assisting early childhood to avoid pornographic content on the internet: how is the ability of parents to choose the right time to communicate, use easy-to-understand language for our child, pay attention to our attitude (as parents) in communicating, and pay attention to the place where the communication is carried out.

Parents are essential to assist their children when accessing internet media. Pornographic content cannot be avoided in internet media. However, the role of parents who are digitally literate and active in discussing with their children can avoid worries and harmful effects of using the internet, especially pornographic content.

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