


Optimizing The Role of Parents in Early Literacy Development Early Childhood in The Digital Era: A Theoretical Study

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ABSTRACT

Literasi dini merupakan fondasi penting bagi perkembangan berpikir anak pada masa emas mereka. Di era digital saat ini, peran orang tua sebagai pendidik utama menjadi semakin krusial dalam membantu anak mengembangkan kemampuan membaca dan utilizing menulis sejak dini, khususnya di lingkungan rumah. Artikel ilmiah ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana orang tua dapat berperan secara optimal dalam menumbuhkan keterampilan literasi dini pada anak, terutama di era digital saat ini. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan tinjauan pustaka, artikel ini membahas apa sebenarnya literasi dini, peran orang tua di dalamnya, dampak media digital terhadap pembelajaran anak, serta tantangan dan peluang yang muncul dari digitalisasi. Studi ini menemukan bahwa keterlibatan orang tua dapat ditingkatkan melalui metode sederhana namun efektif, seperti mendorong anak untuk membaca di rumah, membangun komunikasi kolaboratif antara orang tua dan anak, serta memanfaatkan media digital secara cerdas dan bijaksana sebagai alat untuk menstimulasi keterampilan literasi dini.

Early literacy is a crucial foundation for children's thinking development during their golden years. In today's digital skills in children, particularly in today's digital age. Using a literature review approach, this article discusses what early literacy actually is, the role of parents in it, the impact of digital media on children's learning, and the age, parents' role as primary educators is increasingly crucial in helping children develop early reading and writing skills, particularly within the home. This scientific article explores how parents can optimally engage in fostering early literacy challenges and opportunities that arise from digitalization. The study found that parental involvement can be enhanced through simple yet effective methods, such as encouraging children to read at home, fostering collaborative communication between parents and children, and intelligently and wisely digital media as a tool to stimulate early literacy skills.



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INTRODUCTION

Literacy development in early childhood plays a crucial role as the initial foundation for their future academic skills. Early literacy is not simply teaching children to read and write; it also involves language recognition, the ability to understand symbols, and fostering interest in various forms of written communication. During early childhood, children are in a golden age, where their brains develop rapidly, so the stimulation provided will significantly influence the formation of their basic literacy skills.

In Indonesia, research shows that public literacy is still relatively low. UNESCO data (2023) states that the reading interest rate in Indonesia is only around 0.001, meaning that out of every 1,000 people, only one person enjoys reading. This phenomenon certainly requires special attention, especially i home

education, because the family is the first and foremost environment for a child's growth and development. Parents, as primary educators at home, have a significant responsibility in instilling literacy habits from an early age

With the advancement of technology, the advent of digital technology has brought about changes in family interaction patterns, including in stimulating children's literacy. On the one hand, digital technology can be a beneficial medium for early literacy learning, such as through learning apps, educational videos, and digital storybooks. However, on the other hand, excessive or uncontrolled use of technology can reduce direct interaction between parents and children and even lead to gadget addiction in young children. Therefore, optimizing the role of parents in developing children's early literacy in the digital era is an important issue to study.

The digital era presents both challenges and opportunities for parents in their efforts to stimulate children's literacy. Parents are not sufficient to simply use conventional methods, such as reading books or introducing letters, but are also required to be able to utilize technology as an effective literacy tool. The use of digital media must be done wisely and in a controlled manner to continue to support the strengthening of emotional relationships and the formation of positive character in children.

This article is structured as a theoretical study that conceptually discusses optimizing the role of parents in developing early childhood literacy in the digital era. The discussion focuses on understanding the concept of early literacy, the strategic role of parents in early childhood education, the influence of digital media on children's literacy learning processes, and strategies for optimizing parents' roles in the digital era. It is hoped that this article can serve as a reference for parents, educators, and early childhood education practitioners in developing early literacy learning strategies that are appropriate to current developments without abandoning the essential values of social interaction.

METHOD

Theoretical Study

The method used in writing this article is a theoretical study or library research. This theoretical study method was conducted by collecting, reviewing, and analyzing various relevant literature sources related to the role of parents in developing early childhood literacy in the digital era. The sources used include books, scientific journal articles, proceedings, previous research results, and official regulations and policies related to early childhood education.

In conducting this study, data collection methods were conducted through a literature search using academic search engines such as Google Scholar, DOAJ, and the nationally accredited journal database (Sinta). The literature inclusion criteria used were:

1. Sources published within the last 10 years.
2. The focus of the discussion is on early childhood literacy, parental involvement, and the use of digital technology in early childhood education.
3. It has theoretical and practical relevance to the study objectives.

The data analysis method in this study was descriptive-qualitative, namely by categorizing information from various literature according to the study theme, then compiling a theoretical synthesis to address the discussion focus. The analysis emphasized identifying the role of parents in early literacy development and the challenges and opportunities of utilizing digital technology to support children's literacy. By using this theoretical study method, it is hoped that a comprehensive understanding will be gained regarding optimizing the role of parents in early childhood literacy development in the digital era as a basis for developing better educational policies and practices.

According to Rahmawati and Sari (2022), early literacy is a basic skill that includes the ability to recognize letters, numbers, symbols, and language skills that children acquire from an early age. Early literacy is not limited to formal reading and writing skills, but also involves the process of building an understanding of the meaning of communication through various media. Early childhood children who receive optimal literacy stimulation tend to be better academically prepared when entering elementary education (Setiawan, 2023). Early literacy consists of several important aspects, namely:

1. Phonological awareness: the ability to recognize and manipulate sounds in words.
2. Print awareness: understanding the function of print in communication.
3. Vocabulary: the number of words a child understands and uses.
4. Narrative comprehension: the ability to understand and retell the content of a story.

The Role of Parents in Early Literacy Development

In a study conducted by Pratiwi (2023), the role of parents in early literacy development is categorized into three main functions: facilitator, companion, and role model. Parents who actively read stories, provide reading materials, and engage children in light discussions about daily activities will help build a strong foundation for early literacy. A study from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (2024) also emphasized the importance of collaboration between schools and parents in supporting literacy programs in the home environment.

The Digital Era and Early Literacy

The digital era has brought significant changes to early childhood literacy development patterns. According to research by Yusuf and Lestari (2022), digital media such as educational apps and interactive videos can be effective tools for developing early literacy, provided their use is controlled and age-appropriate. On the other hand, uncontrolled technology use can negatively impact children's social and interaction skills. Therefore, parents need to take an active role in monitoring and optimizing the use of digital media.

Strategies for Optimizing Parental Roles in the Digital Era

Some strategies parents can implement in the digital era include:

1. Reading digital storybooks together (interactive reading).
2. Using game-based literacy learning applications.
3. Implementing screen time rules as recommended by the WHO.
4. Prioritizing direct verbal interaction before introducing digital media.
5. Being a role model for healthy reading activities and technology use. (Lestari & Pramana, 2024).

To understand the differences in characteristics between conventional and digital media in early literacy development, parents need to implement various optimization strategies to support their children throughout the literacy learning process. These strategies aim to balance the benefits of technology through direct interaction between parents and children ensure that the learning process continues in a healthy and effective manner.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Parents in Developing Early Childhood Literacy

Parents play a central role in the process of developing early literacy in early childhood. Early literacy encompasses not only reading and writing skills, but also the ability to understand symbols, recognize letters, and foster an interest in reading. According to Rahmawati and Sari (2022), parental involvement in reading activities with children can increase children's interest in reading from an early age, both through conventional and digital media.

Conventional Media vs. Digital Media in Early Literacy

The use of early literacy media is divided into two main categories: conventional media and digital media. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages. The following table explains the differences in the characteristics of the two media:

Table 1. Comparison of Conventional and Digital Early Literacy Media

Aspects	Conventional Media	Digital Media
Media Types	Printed storybooks, posters, flash Cards	Educational apps, interactive videos, e-books
The Role of Parents	Reading aloud, accompanying children in reading	selecting apps, limiting screen time, and direct interaction.
Advantages	More intense social interaction, strengthened bonding.	Attractive visuals, interactive, wider access.
Challenges	Limited media variety, children get bored quickly	Risk of screen addiction, requires strict supervision
Age Suitability	Suitable for all preschool ages	Recommended for ages 4 and up (with supervision)

Based on the table above, it can be concluded that digital media can be an effective supporter of early literacy development if used appropriately. However, the advantages of conventional media, particularly in strengthening the emotional bond between parents and children, remain irreplaceable.

Strategies for Optimizing Parents' Roles in the Digital Era

To optimally develop early literacy, parents need to implement appropriate strategies. These strategies focus not only on providing media but also on patterns of interaction between parents and children. Several strategies that parents can implement are presented in the following tables:

Table 2. Strategies for Optimizing Parents' Roles in the Digital Era

Parenting Strategies	Brief Explanation
Reading digital books with children	Parents read stories from e-books with interactive involvement from their children
Set a screen time schedule	Set a daily time for using digital literacy apps
Choosing the right educational app	Ensuring that the app is age-appropriate and contains early literacy elements
Becoming a role model in reading Activities	Parents demonstrate reading habits directly at home
Prioritize verbal interactions Direct	More dialogue than just giving gadgets

From this table, it can be seen that active parental involvement in the reading process, managing gadget use time, and providing concrete examples of reading habits are key to optimizing children's early literacy development.

Challenges and Solutions

Some challenges in developing early literacy in the digital era include:

1. Lack of digital literacy among parents.
2. Minimal control over the content of applications used by children.
3. Children's dependence on screens (screen addiction).

As a solution, digital literacy training for parents can be an effective intervention, as Nurlaili (2024) noted that involving parents in digital media training positively contributes to improving the quality of support at home.

Synthesis

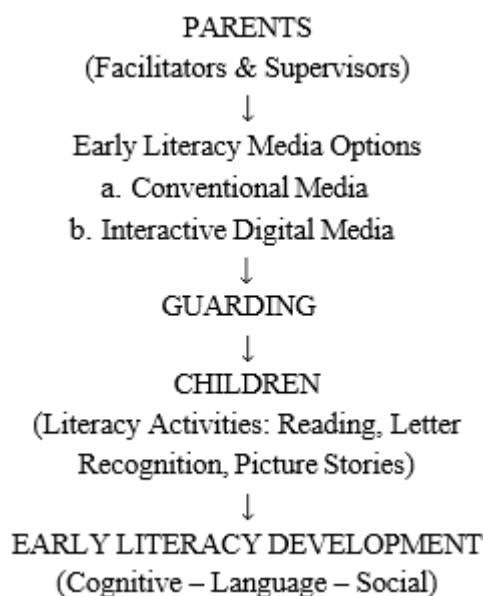
Optimizing the role of parents in developing early childhood literacy in the digital era must consider:

1. A balance between conventional and digital media.
2. Active supervision and mentoring.
3. Developing the habit of direct verbal interaction as a foundation for literacy.
4. Selecting child-friendly and educational digital media.

Result

Conceptual Model:

In developing early literacy in the digital era, parents' role is not only as a provider of learning resources, but also as a facilitator, supervisor, and role model for their children. Parents are responsible for selecting appropriate media (both conventional and digital), supporting the media use process, and ensuring that literacy activities become part of their children's daily routine. Conceptually, this interaction can be illustrated in the following model:



Model Explanation:

1. Parents act as:
 - a. Facilitators → Provide literacy media (physical books, digital applications).
 - b. Supervisors → Direct, limit, and control the duration and type of digital media used.
2. Media is used wisely:
 - a. Conventional media (storybooks, pictures).
 - b. Interactive Digital Media (educational apps, child-friendly animated videos).
3. Parental guidance is a key factor in establishing routines and meaningful interactions throughout the literacy process.
4. Finally, consistent literacy activities will encourage the development of early literacy, including cognitive, language, and socio-emotional aspects of children.

The role of parents in this scheme cannot stand alone without a good understanding of the characteristics of early childhood in the digital age. The success of optimizing early literacy is largely determined by parental awareness in wisely managing available media. In this context, digital media should not be used solely as a means of entertainment, but rather should be directed towards becoming an effective and enjoyable learning medium. According to Fitriani (2022), integrating digital media into children's literacy development will be effective if parents prioritize direct interaction, both verbal and non-verbal, during reading or storytelling activities. Furthermore, Hidayat (2021) emphasizes the importance of parents establishing consistent literacy routines at home as part of a family literacy culture. These routines include scheduled book reading together, simple discussions after watching educational videos, and providing language stimulation through daily conversation. In this process, parents are expected to model positive literacy for their children, not only by providing media but also by demonstrating an interest in reading and guiding children in understanding the content.

The Importance of Parents' Role in Early Literacy

The role of parents in developing early literacy in young children is crucial. According to various studies, the family is the first and primary environment where children receive initial stimulation in language and literacy skills. Parents not only act as primary educators but also as role models in fostering literacy activities at home (Suryana, 2022). With active parental involvement, children will more easily develop reading habits, recognize letters, understand the meaning of stories, and develop an interest in books.

Literacy Challenges in the Digital Age

The development of digital technology presents both a challenge and an opportunity for early literacy development. On the one hand, gadgets can reduce direct interaction between parents and children and shift children's interests from physical books to digital visual content. On the other hand, digital media can also be a means of strengthening literacy, for example through interactive storybook apps, educational videos, and letter- and number-based games (Lestari & Hidayat, 2023). The main

challenge is ensuring parents are able to use technology wisely and selectively to support the literacy process, not the other way around.

Strategies for Optimizing the Role of Parents in the Digital Era

The role of parents in developing early literacy in early childhood in the digital era requires strategies adapted to current developments. Technology can be a tool to support literacy, but without parental guidance, digital media can actually shift children's focus from reading to passive entertainment. Therefore, parents need to be actively involved through the following strategies:

1. **Improving Parental Digital Literacy** Parental digital literacy is a crucial foundation. According to Purnama et al. (2022), parents' understanding of how to choose and control technology use significantly influences children's interaction patterns with digital media. Digital literacy encompasses not only technical skills but also critical thinking skills in evaluating the digital content children access. Digital literacy workshops or training for parents are a strategic step to increase their awareness of the potential dangers and benefits of digital media.
2. **Active Guidance When Children Access Digital Media** In line with the findings of Aulia & Rachmawati (2021), parents who actively accompany their children while using digital devices can minimize the risk of gadget addiction and exposure to negative content. Parents are advised to not only supervise but also be directly involved in their children's digital interactions—such as explaining the content of digital stories, discussing after watching educational videos, and limiting screen time according to WHO recommendations (a maximum of 1 hour per day for children aged 2-5 years).
3. **Integration of Print and Digital Media** While reading helps improve conceptual understanding, the use of physical books remains necessary as a means of concrete stimulation. The combination of the two provides a more varied and optimal learning experience for children at the sensorimotor and preoperational stages of development.
4. **Building a Culture of Literacy at Home** Research by Dewi & Mariana (2024) confirms that active parental involvement in creating a culture of literacy at home has a significant impact on children's early literacy skills. Parents can build this culture through a routine of reading stories, providing books at home, or involving children in simple literacy activities, such as recognizing letters through posters at home. A reading culture within the family environment will lay the foundation for long-term reading interest.
5. **Collaboration Between Parents and Schools** A study by Widiastuti et al. (2021) states that synergy between parents and teachers is crucial in strengthening early childhood literacy. Parents need to be involved in school literacy programs, participate in educational parenting activities, and consult regularly with teachers regarding their children's literacy development. This collaboration allows for continuity between literacy stimulation at school and at home.

With these strategies, optimizing the role of parents in developing early literacy in the digital era is expected to be more effective. Parents' role is not only to supervise technology use, but also as companions, facilitators, and role models in developing literacy habits from an early age.

CONCLUSION

Early childhood literacy development is a fundamental process that influences children's readiness for formal education and long-term development. In the digital era, the role of parents as primary caregivers is increasingly important to optimize, given that children are exposed to various forms of digital media from an early age. Optimizing this role cannot be done spontaneously but requires a planned strategy tailored to the child's developmental needs and the characteristics of the era. Theoretical studies show that parents act not only as supervisors but also as facilitators, companions, and role models in shaping children's literacy habits. Optimal parental roles include improving digital literacy so that parents can guide children in the positive use of technology, and active support when children access digital devices, and integrating digital media with print media as complementary literacy resources. With adequate digital literacy skills, parents can select appropriate content, set time limits for digital media use, and utilize the media as an educational tool, not just entertainment.

On the other hand, a culture of literacy within the family has a significant influence on shaping children's interest in reading and literacy skills from an early age. Developing the habit of reading books

together, providing a reading corner at home, and making literacy activities enjoyable are strategic steps parents can implement. This strategy aligns with child development theory, which emphasizes the importance of learning through social interaction and direct experience within the child's immediate environment, namely the family.

Collaboration between parents and educational institutions is also a crucial component in optimizing early literacy development. This synergy ensures continuity between literacy stimulation at school and at home. Parents need to be involved in school literacy programs, participate in educational parenting activities, and communicate regularly with teachers regarding their children's literacy development. This collaborative approach ensures that children receive comprehensive literacy support in their two primary life environments.

Thus, it can be concluded that the role of parents in developing early childhood literacy in the digital era will only be optimal if supported by increased parental digital literacy competencies, appropriate mentoring strategies, balanced management of print and digital media, the establishment of a literacy culture at home, and close collaboration with schools.

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