



THE IMPACT OF USING SMARTPHONE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD

Abdul Marifⁱ

Universitas Muslim Nusantara (UMN) Al Washliyah,
Medan, Indonesia

Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact that occurs in early childhood in the use of smartphones in the Binjai Village, Medan City. This research used descriptive qualitative method. The subjects of this study were taken using purposive sampling, with the research subjects of parents who have children aged 4-6 years who are in Binjai Village, Medan City, totaling 10 people. Based on interviews and observations conducted by researchers, the researchers obtained research results which stated that there was a negative impact on early childhood using smartphones, children tended to be emotionally influenced when they were not given a smartphone, children tended to be unable to control themselves in terms of smartphone use. They were also dependent and did not care about the surrounding environment when using a smartphone.

Keywords: early childhood; impact; smartphone use

1. Introduction

Smartphones are familiar instrument to all people in this world in this day and age. The rapid development of gadgets from time to time allows all individuals to use them proficiently at all ages ranging from adults to even children. Daeng, Mewengkang, & Kalarakat (2017) state that a smartphone is a cellphone with a greater ability to convey information, play games, and various other features. In addition, Selfiana (2018) also said that smartphones can be used to facilitate communication but can also be a barrier to its main activities. Anthropologically, smartphones are human works that aim to meet human needs. Some of these needs are negative and some are positive, depending on the person using them.

Smartphones will certainly make the activities of each individual easier, but with proper methods and self-control. Rambe, Mudjiran, & Marjohan (2017) state that children who use smartphones too often will reduce their level of self-control, so that children cannot develop their potential and control themselves better. Therefore, the use of a

ⁱ Correspondence: email abdulmarif@umnaw.ac.id

smartphone must be measured by parents. Zulfitria (2017) states that parenting approach is vital in the use of smartphones in children.

Early childhood is a golden age, a time when children experience very rapid growth and development, both physically and mentally. In addition to physical development, early childhood also experiences motor, social, emotional and cognitive development. This also makes young children want to try new things. Loziena (2018) mentions that the golden age of children is the golden age of children, which is the most effective period in children's development and is very effective in optimizing the potential for children's intelligence to become useful human resources. This surely needs the support and direction of parents in various things to direct children to positive things. In addition, according to Trenggonowati & Kulsum (2018) 50% of the intelligence capabilities of human children are when the child is 4 years old, meaning that the golden age is very influential for the child's future. Therefore, there is an importance of the contribution of parents in shaping the character and development of children to create a strong foundation for more human resources in the future.

This makes young children have a deeper desire to use smartphones, whether it is for watching videos or just playing games. The use of smartphones that are familiar to every individual is also very well known by early childhood. Masthura, S., & Renila, (2018) stated that children 3-6 years of age are able to use a smartphone which is with parental supervision. In addition, according to Mayenti & Sunita (2018), the use of smartphones will have a negative impact if not with parental supervision. But in fact, parents are still very negligent in supervising children on their smartphone use, parents still do not understand what impact will occur if a child uses a smartphone without parental supervision. Unconsciously, smartphones actually add to the burden on their children, namely the burden of monitoring their fellow children playing smartphones. Finally, Sunita & Mayasari (2018) stated that 74 kindergarten children in Pekanbaru already know and use smartphones or gadgets, and parents still do not understand what impact will occur when children use smartphones without parental control.

Based on the results of interviews conducted by researchers with parents who are currently residing in Binjai Urban Village, Medan, it is found that parents still do not understand the impact that will occur when children play gadgets without parental supervision as well as the effect of providing gadgets without time restrictions. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine the impact that occurs in early childhood in the use of smartphones in Binjai Village, Medan City.

2. Method

This research was conducted in August 2020. This research was conducted in Binjai Village, Medan City. The sampling technique used in this study was purposive sampling technique, in which the research subjects were taken based on specific objectives. Subjects in this study were parents who have children whose range of ages are between 4-6 years. They are currently residing in Binjai Village, Medan City, amounting to 10 people. This research method uses descriptive qualitative, where the data collection technique uses

observation and interviews conducted by researchers to the parents of the research subjects. It is in accordance with the statement from Moleong (2007) that argued the qualitative method is a method that examines a group of people based on one's observations, backgrounds, and actions.

In this study, researchers used interview and observation instruments to collect data on research subjects. Gunawan (2013) states that the instruments used in qualitative descriptive research are in the form of interviews and observations. Therefore, the researcher will conduct interviews with 10 people who are parents of early childhood category whose age range from 4-6 years. Then the researchers also made observations of their children to see the effects that occur when children use smartphones.

3. Results and Discussion

This study was carried out with research subjects totaling 10 early childhood children with an age range of 4-6 years who were in the Binjai Village, Medan City. The results showed a negative effect on early childhood when using smartphones. The results of interviews with 10 parents who have children aged 4-6 years are as follows:

A. How many hours do children play a smartphone per day?

ARB states that *"the child plays the smartphone for more than 3.5 hours per day, because the research subject is busy working in the farm and after returning home, she is followed by homework, so that she deliberately allows her child to play the smartphone so that she is not disturbed in doing her work"*.

UT states that *"a child plays a smartphone for more than 3 hours per day, because after a child returns from school, she feels the child needs to be rewarded by playing games on a smartphone."*

BU stated that *"she did not know how long the child played on his smartphone because the child was deliberately given a separate smartphone by the parents, so that the child did not borrow their parents' smartphones."*

APP's statement is almost the same as BU, which states that *"children are deliberately given their own smartphones without them having the time restriction."*

ITK stated *"children play more than 3 hours per day on smartphones, because the children are always demanding to play with the gadget when mom is at home."*

MC stated that *"children play their smartphones for more than 3 hours, because their parents are busy at work."*

CE stated that *"children play the smartphone for more than 4 hours, because parents do not want their children to bother them while doing their homework."*

MT stated that *"children play more than 3 hours per day on smartphones, because children prefer to play on smartphones, and always ask their parents for it."*

MP stated that *"children play smartphones for less than 2 hours per day, because children will be given to play smartphones if they are willing to eat while watching videos."*

IR states that *"children play less than 1 hour of smartphone per day."*

B. When are children playing smartphones?

ARB declares that *"the child plays the smartphone all the time, when the child asks to play with the gadget, it will be given by the mother."*

UT states that *"the child plays the smartphone only when the parent is doing work."*

BU stated that *"my son plays his smartphone all the time, because he already has his own smartphone."*

APP's statement is almost the same as BU because *"children already have their own smartphones so they do not know when they use their smartphones."*

ITK stated that *"the child will play the smartphone when the parent arrives home, and the smartphone will always be held by the child, if no one contacts her."*

MC stated that *"the child will play on the smartphone when she is working, so that the child will not disturb her at work."*

CE stated at the time she was working

MT states *"when a child asks for it, she will give her smartphone."*

MP states that *"the child plays the smartphone only during the hours when the kid eats, such as breakfast, lunch and dinner."*

IR stated that *"the child will play the smartphone, if the parent gives the child permission."*

C. What will occur if the child is not given a smartphone when he asks for it?

ARB states that *"she never gives her smartphone."*

UT stated that *"never gave up her smartphone"*.

BU stated that *"my son already has his own smartphone."*

APP stated that *"my son already has his own smartphone."*

TK states that *"the child will be angry and cry."*

MC stated that *"the child will get angry, cry and even scream."*

CE stated that *"the child will be angry and start to cry."*

MT stated that *"she never give his smartphone."*

MP said that *"children will always ask because they are accustomed to using a smartphone at mealtime."*

IR stated that *"the child will shut up, and dare not ask for it again."*

D. What do children do when playing smartphones?

ARB states that *"does not know what children are playing on their smartphone."*

UT declares that *"does not know what the child is playing on the smartphone."*

BU says that *"I do not know, because children already have their own smartphones."*

APP says that *"children play games more, but do not know what the games are selected by the kid."*

ITK states that *"does not know what children are playing on their smartphones."*

MC declares *"I do not know what the child is playing on the smartphone."*

CE declares that *"does not know what children play on their smartphones."*

MT states that *"the child plays a game, but does not know the game he is playing."*

MP states that *"only watching videos, and not allowed to view other applications, including games."*

IR states that *"watch video only"*.

E. Is the child accompanied when using a smartphone?

ARB stated *"never been accompanied."*

UT stated, *"never been accompanied."*

BU stated, *"never been accompanied."*

APP stated, *"never been accompanied."*

ITK stated, *"never been assisted."*

MC stated *"sometimes, only when she is not busy working."*

CE stated *"never been accompanied."*

MT stated *"sometimes, only when she is not busy working."*

MP stated *"yes, always accompanied."*

IR: stated *"yes, always accompanied."*

Based on the results of interviews conducted by researchers with parents of the research subject, there is a negative impact on children in their daily lives who use smartphones for more than 3 hours per day. Out of the 10 early childhood children who were the research subjects, 8 people used smartphones more than 3 hours per day and 2 people only used smartphones at certain hours, for example, when a child wants to eat, or when parents have separate activities, such as cooking or cleaning the house. Based on the results of interviews with parents whose children use smartphone for more than 3 hours per day, children have a negative impact, namely children's emotional outburst increases when they are not given a smartphone and tend to cry, scream and even hit people around them. When playing on smartphones, children become less concerned with their surroundings, so that they are difficult to communicate when using a smartphone. Children will also tend to do something ordered by their parents if they get the reward for playing games on a smartphone, if they do not get the reward for playing games, the child will whine and cry.

It is different from the results of interviews with parents whose children use smartphones only at certain hours. The results of interviews with parents stated that children tend to be able to control themselves in using smartphones; children listen more to what their parents say and tend to be able to communicate with them in sharing sessions. After conducting interviews with parents, the researcher continued by observing the child. Following are the researcher's observations to the child.

A. Children are accompanied by their parents when using a smartphone.

ICR (age 5 years): *"No, children are left to play alone."*

KP (age 4 years): *"No, children are left to play alone."*

KC (age 5 years): *"No, children are allowed to play alone."*

BT (age 6 years): *"No, the child is left to play alone."*

BR (age 5 years): *"No, children are left to play alone."*

CK (age 5 years): *"No, children are left to play alone."*

SQ (age 6 years): *"No, children are left to play alone."*

TK (age 4 years): *"Sometimes, accompanied."*

RT (age 4 years): *"Accompanied."*

ZA (age 4 years): *"Accompanied."*

B. Children's Understanding Level in Using Smartphone.

ICR (age 5 years): *"Children admit that they do not really understand of the use of smartphones, except games."*

KP (age 4 years): *"Children only know how to play games and videos."*

KC (age 5 years): *"Children claim to understand using smartphones to play games and watch videos."*

BT (age 6 years): *"Children claim to understand how to use various applications on smartphones."*

BR (age 5 years): *"Children only understand how to use a smartphone to watch videos."*

CK (age 5 years): *"Children only know how to use a smartphone to watch videos."*

SQ (age 6 years): *"Children only understand how to use a smartphone to watch videos."*

TK (age 4 years): *"Children only know how to use a smartphone to watch videos."*

RT (age 4 years): *"Children only know how to watch videos."*

ZA (age 4 years): *"Children only understand smartphones to watch videos."*

C. Children's concern for their surrounding when playing smartphones

ICR (age 5 years): *"Children do not seem to care when other friends come to ask them to play, and stay focused on their smartphone."*

KP (age 4 years): *"Children want to be invited to talk, even when he is using a smartphone."*

KC (age 5 years): *"Children tend not to care if someone asks them to talk."*

BT (age 6 years): *"Children tend not to care when spoken to, and are more focused on their surroundings."*

BR (age 5 years): *"Children prefer to be silent, and do not respond to people who ask them to talk."*

CK (age 5 years): *"Children Looks like they don't care and are cool with the smartphone they use."*

SQ (age 6 years): *"Children want to respond when someone asks them when using a smartphone."*

TK (age 4 years): *"Children prefer to be silent, and do not respond to people who ask them to talk."*

RT (age 4 years): *“Children prefer to be silent, and do not respond to people who ask them to talk.”*

ZA (age 4 years): *“Children prefer to be silent, and do not respond to people who ask them to talk.”*

Then based on the results of observations made by researchers, smartphones with small and efficient forms to carry everywhere make parents continue to carry them when traveling with their children. Even children freely carry their parents' smartphones when they are at home and out of reach of their parents. This is because parents feel safer when the child is given a smartphone; parents feel the child does not interfere with their parents' activities. Children also tend to play games that should not be played by children of their age such as games containing fighting content, and there is an emergence of prohibited sites when children play games online.

In addition, children also seem to not care about the surroundings around them, only busy with the games they use, and children also admit that they do not understand the use of smartphones, all they know is that they only use smartphones and tend to imitate what they play and watch. Based on the results of interviews and observations made by researchers, children who use smartphones will have negative impacts such as difficulty being requested to communicate and not caring when someone asks them to communicate. This is in accordance with the statement from Zaini (2019) who states that children who use gadgets or smartphones at the age of 4-6 years will have conflicting conditions, meaning that the child is not in the appropriate circumstance. Their physical activity and social interaction will be minimal and reduced so that it will be deprived for social emotional development.

Children will become dependent if they use smartphones more often even though they do not need them particularly for playing games and watching videos for more than 2 hours per day. Heni and Mujahid (2018) states that children are more nonchalant with their own world when playing gadgets or smartphones, from 72.7% of children who often use their smartphones will experience dependence, even children are able to play games they are not supposed to play. Children also tend to imitate what they watch, such as imitating movements in videos, and imitating sounds in game play. This is aligning to the statement from Tentama (2013) children are very fast in imitating the behavior they have seen, because children are still easy to remember and imitate what they see. The age of a child who is still 4-6 years old is the golden age of the child. It is the time for them to imitate what they see and hear. Moreover, they are also fast in learning and remembering things. Kertamuda (2015) also states that the golden age is a period where children experience rapid development and growth, so they can quickly receive the stimuli they get from outside and can easily mimic.

Lack of parental supervision when using smartphones allows children to play games that contain violent content and can open prohibited sites that often appear by themselves when playing games. Children should remain under parental supervision when playing games so that they can be given directions and the content they use does not have a bad impact on them. It is in accordance with the statement from Listiana et al.

(2020) which states that smartphone use is mandatory with parental supervision, because children still do not understand the positive and negative impacts they get when using smartphones. The supervision of smartphone use must be accompanied by parents in order to provide advice to their children when playing inappropriate content (Utama, F., & Hasmira, 2019).

Children can play games that contain violent content and fights which will lead to their development and this is affected by non-existent parental supervision when using a smartphone, (Rahman, 2009) states that preschoolers should use smartphones with parental supervision. Otherwise, the worst case is that it will increase the dependence of children on smartphones. This is in line with the statement from Kurniati, Nur Alfaeni, & Andriani (2020) which argues that parents play an important role in accompanying children in any activity so that they can provide education and maintain religious values in children.

4. Conclusions and Suggestions

Smartphones are one of the results of technology that greatly simplifies individual life, but the use of smartphones must also be in accordance with their needs. The use of smartphones in early childhood can cause negative impacts ranging from dependence on smartphone use, uncontrolled use of smartphones in his daily life and even social and emotional disturbances for the child.

Based on the conclusion, it is better if the use of smartphones in early childhood should be given limitations. Parental supervision is highly expected in the use of smartphones in children so that they remain in proper care. Parents also notice to acknowledge what the child has done on their smartphone. And for future researchers, it is hoped that this research can continue to provide insights in order reduce the negative impact on the use of smartphones in early childhood.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

About the Author

Abdul Marif Rambe is currently a lecturer in the Pancasila and Civic Education Study Program. He teaches social anthropology, religious life and socio-cultural education.

References

- Daeng, I. T. M., Mewengkang, N., & Kalesaran, Edmon R. (2017). Penggunaan Smartphone Dalam Menunjang Aktivitas Perkuliahan Oleh Mahasiswa Fispol Unsrat Manado. *E-Journal Acta Diurna*, 6(1), 1–15.
- Gunawan, I. (2013). Metode penelitian kualitatif. *Jakarta: Bumi Aksara*, 143.

- Heni, H., & Mujahid, A. J. (2018). Pengaruh Penggunaan Smartphone terhadap Perkembangan Personal Sosial Anak Usia Pra-Sekolah. *Jurnal Keperawatan Silampari*, 2(1), 330-342.
- Kertamuda, M. A. (2015). *Golden Age-Strategi Sukses membentuk Karakter Emas pada Anak*. Elex Media Komputindo.
- Kurniati, E., Nur Alfaeni, D. K., & Andriani, F. (2020). Analisis Peran Orang Tua dalam Mendampingi Anak di Masa Pandemi Covid-19. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 5(1), 241. <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v5i1.541>
- Listiana, A., Guswanti, N., Anak, P., Dini, U., Pendidikan, F. I., Indonesia, U. P., ... Info, A. (2020). *Pedagogia Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*. 18(01), 97–111.
- Loziena, U. (2018). Masa Efektif Merancang Kualitas Anak. *Uin Arraniry*, 2(anak usia dini), 56.
- Masthura, S., S, M. I., & Renila, A. S. (2018). Hubungan Penggunaan Gadget Dengan Perkembangan Psikososial Anak Usia Sekolah di SD Negeri 1 Kota Banda Aceh. *Jurnal Aceh Medika*, 2(1), 171–175.
- Mayenti, N. F., & Sunita, I. (2018). Dampak Penggunaan Gadget Terhadap Perkembangan Anak Usia Dini Di Paud Dan Tk Taruna Islam Pekanbaru. *Photon: Jurnal Sain Dan Kesehatan*, 9(1), 208–213. <https://doi.org/10.37859/jp.v9i1.1092>
- Moleong, L. J. (2007). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*, Penerbit Remaja Rosda Karya.
- Rahman. (2009). Karakteristik Perkembangan Anak Usia Dini. *Kesehatan*, 2, 45.
- Rambe, S. A., Mudjiran, M., & Marjohan, M. (2017). Pengembangan Modul Layanan Informasi untuk Mengembangkan Kontrol Diri dalam Penggunaan Smartphone. *Konselor*, 6(4), 132. <https://doi.org/10.24036/02017648051-0-00>
- Selfiana. (2018). Penggunaan Smartphone Sebagai Media Komunikasi. *Jurnal Kesehatan*, 2(Smartphone), 10.
- Sunita, I., & Mayasari, E. (2018). Pengawasan Orangtua Terhadap Dampak Penggunaan Gadget Pada Anak. *Jurnal Endurance*, 3(3), 510. <https://doi.org/10.22216/jen.v3i3.2485>
- Tentama, F. (2013). Perilaku Anak Agresif: Asesmen Dan Intervensinya. *Jurnal Kesehatan Masyarakat (Journal of Public Health)*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.12928/kesmas.v6i2.1057>
- Trenggonowati, D. L., & Kulsum, K. (2018). Analisis Faktor Optimalisasi Golden Age Anak Usia Dini Studi Kasus Di Kota Cilegon. *Journal Industrial Services*, 4(1), 48–56. <https://doi.org/10.36055/jiss.v4i1.4088>
- Utama, F., & Hasmira, M. H. (2019). Bentuk Pengawasan Orang Tua Pada Anak-Anak Pengguna Smartphone. *Research. Culture & Society: Journal of Anthropological Research*, 1(1), 103-109. <https://doi.org/10.24036/culture/vol1-iss1/20>
- Zaini, M. (2019). *Jurnal Obsesi : Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Persepsi Orangtua terhadap Hadirnya Era Teknologi Digital di Kalangan Anak Usia Dini*. 3(1), 254–264. <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v3i1.127>
- Zulfitri. (2017). Pola Asuh Orangtua dalam Penggunaan Smartphone Pada Anak. *Holistika Jurnal Ilmiah*, 1(smartphone), 95–102.

Creative Commons licensing terms

Author(s) will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Education Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflicts of interest, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated into the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).