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The Role of Parents in the Use of Gadgets in Early Childhood

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A B S T R A C T	A R T I C L E I N F O
This research is motivated by the importance of the role of parents, especially the role of the father which cannot be ignored. This study aims to see parental mediation given by fathers and mothers to children when using gadgets. The research method uses a qualitative approach with a case study research design. Data collection uses in-depth interviews and field notes involving three parents who have children aged 2-5 years in Harjamukti, Cirebon City which were analysed using grounded theory. The results of this study indicate that parents discuss, search, choose, and explain content that can be accessed in active mediation. Then, in the restriction mediation, parents provide restrictions on time, content, application, and distance. Co-viewing mediation is a way to increase closeness with the children and avoid excessive use of gadgets. Thus, parents collaborate on active mediation, restriction mediation, and co-viewing mediation to regulate and manage their children's use of gadgets. 	

1. INTRODUCTION

Parents play an important role in parenting, and protecting the stages of Child Development is not easy (Ginsburg and Committee, 2007). Moreover, in recent years Information and communication technology is developing more rapidly which can influence life without exception (Wang, 2009). This is supported by a survey conducted by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2020 which explained the increasing number of information and communication technology users in Indonesia with a percentage of 62, 84% followed by internet usage which reached 78.18% (Santoso *et al.,* 2023). Improvement of information and communication technology is a certainty that cannot be avoided because this technology will run and develop along with the progress of science.

The rapid advancement of communication technology, such as gadgets, is the task of parents in filtering, and providing information and appropriate assistance for their children, especially in the use of gadgets that are appropriate for their age and stage of development (Prasanti, 2016). Because the first and main educational institution for children is the family it is not surprising that education in the family should be done by parents, especially in the provision of appropriate assistance and care (Eccles and Harold, 1993). This care and support are not only limited to the preschool period but parents also need to fulfil assistance in the child's digital progress starting from the prenatal period until he grows up (Tosun, 2020). One of the roles of parents in this digital era is to provide assistance and clear boundaries regarding things that can and cannot be done by children when using gadgets (Plowman *et al.,* 2010). In principle, parents need to ask for behavioural policies to introduce ethics and provide an understanding of the right duration when using gadgets.

Accompanying children and providing the right parenting in this digital era is a tremendous challenge for parents because they are not born and grow up with the advancement of information and Communication Technology (Tosun, 2020). Even so, parents must have competence and knowledge in the use of gadgets and be aware of the risks that arise in their use. Not only that, creating a safe and comfortable environment for children when operating the gadgets is also needed. What's more, parents will be an example for their children so parents should be more proficient and up-to-date with products and new trends generated by gadgets (Clayton and Murphy, 2016). This is done to avoid the formation of a digital divide between parents and children.

This technological progress is undeniable, children will know and use it because children are born and the body is in technological progress so technology becomes part of their lives like it or not children will interact with digital gadgets, such as televisions, smartphones, and laptops (Prensky, 2001). Digital gadgets that are often used by children are gadgets. This is because the gadgets can be used anywhere, anytime according to the needs of its users and the features contained in it also vary which makes people easy to use it (Nadar, 2018).

Even so, this gadget often causes concern among parents because these gadgets can be a friend or opponent for its use. When its use is done properly, the gadgets can become a friend because the gadgets can make it easier for people to communicate, access information or knowledge, and become a medium of education for early childhood (Dewi and Rachmaniar, 2018). But different things when its use is not appropriate to make the gadgets opponent for its use, such as headaches, disorders in memory, fatigue, and indifference to their environment can even interfere with posture (Nadar, 2018; Palaiologou, 2016). So, to protect children from these risks and problems, it is necessary to have assistance from parents because parents must play an active role in assisting, supervising, and controlling children in the socialization process so that children can grow and have safe,

comfortable, and healthy gadget habits and avoid the influence caused by Gadgets (Lee, 2013). Because the role of parents is none other than as a primary agent in the socialization of gadget use.

Various studies on the use of gadgets have been presented with a focus and are different from each other. In the previous study, Thompson *et al.* (2017) describe that the provision of time and content restrictions on the assistance of gadgets is the main approach taken by parents. The role and behaviour of the father will affect the development of the child (Bakermans *et al.*, 2019). So that not only does the mother play an important role in mentoring, but the father also plays an important role in monitoring and engaging in the use of his child's gadgets. Therefore, the role of the father cannot be ignored so the author wants to examine in depth the role of parents, fathers, and mothers with the theory of parental assistance in assisting and supervising their children when using gadgets.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a Case Study research design. This study starts from the concern of parents about the impact of gadgets especially now that the use of gadgets in the family environment cannot be avoided because of a need. So, it does not like children aged 2-4 years to begin interested in using gadgets. This study was conducted on 3 families consisting of mothers and fathers who have children aged 2-4 years, and parents who have permitted their child to use a gadget belonging to a parent or other family. This research was conducted in Harjamukti, Cirebon. The selection of this research is based on the number of early children who have been introduced to and playing with gadgets, ranging from children aged 2 years. In addition, several points in the area have installed free internet access so that children can easily use gadgets and access the internet.

The author conducted in-depth interviews and made field notes on the three families. Data collected through interviews and Field Notes will be processed using grounded theory analysis techniques. Grounded theory is a technique of analysing qualitative research by coding the data that has been collected through interviews, observations, and documentation (Bowen, 2009). This analysis begins with the collection of data through interviews and other materials using recording gadgets, and mobile phones. After that, the author will write the oral data into written form. The transcript is used to facilitate the author's recognition of the data and develop an in-depth understanding of the data obtained. However, the author will check the transcript against the original recording to maintain the accuracy of the data. Then the Author re-reads the entire data to find interesting ideas and perhaps identify patterns. When the author has recognized the data, the author will do the encoding of the data that looks interesting from the transcript. The encoding uses many steps open coding, focus coding, axial coding, dan theoretical coding.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
3.1. The Importance of the Role of Parents

Parents realize that they have an important role for their children in shaping the habit of using gadgets that are healthy, safe, and comfortable for children so that children avoid the adverse effects caused by gadgets. So that the father and mother communicate the role and how to use the gadgets with each other. The communication between father and mother includes time limits, applications, gadgets used, content recognition, and supervision. This is done so that supervision and accompaniment by the father and mother do not differ as well as reducing concerns about the use of gadgets in children. Because according to Conner *et*

al. (1997) when mothers and fathers provide support to each other then the interaction with the child will be more effective. Parents also provide guidance and assistance to children by limiting their time of Use and providing supervision of social media access to their children. Accordingly, parents can guide and supervise and provide clarity on the limits to the use of gadgets from the prenatal period until he grows up (Tosun, 2020).

3.2. Parental Mediation in the Use Gadgets

In assisting their children, parents not only provide Restrictive mediation in the form of time and applications but parents also provide active mediation and Co-viewing mediation to their children using gadgets.

3.2.1. Active Mediation

In this active mediation, parents will introduce, discuss, search and select Content, and tell the contents of the content that suits the child. Because active mediation is one aspect of the setting and preparation for the use of the gadgets.

(i)   Introduction of Gadgets in Children

Parents do not directly introduce and do not teach their children about the gadgets, but the child sees and observes the parents when using the gadgets. So, parents argue that children know the gadgets by imitating their behaviour when using the gadgets. Because seeing parents using gadgets, children begin to be interested in these gadgets. In harmony with Bandura (1977) learning and behaviour occur as a result of observing behaviour. Children spend most of their early years watching and learning from parents in their homes. Parents influence children in the use of gadgets by providing examples such as discussing values and attitudes towards the use of gadgets and regulating or encouraging the use of certain types of content (Broekman *et al.*, 2016).

Not only imitate parents but children can also imitate the surrounding environment because it cannot be denied that brother or sister plays an important role in the introduction of gadgets in children. So, there is no special preparation from parents in equipping children before using gadgets. In my opinion, when wanting to form a quality child, parents need to prepare themselves and the material about the gadgets (Feng and Xie, 2014). The introduction of these gadgets is not just a child can use but the child can use the gadgets well (Nirwana *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, the introduction of gadgets in children is not from the family environment, especially parents, but there are other roles such as older siblings and aunts who influence children to know and even use gadgets. because according to Sergi *et al.* (2017) parents, siblings, and peers can be viewed as role models for children when parents or siblings use gadgets at home children start to imitate their activities and then also want to try them themselves.

Even so, there are parents who respond well when their brother or aunt introduces children to gadgets because according to parents today children need to know the name of digital technology, especially gadgets. Because if the child does not know the gadgets, then the child will miss other friends and now gadgets have become a demand for children both in the family environment, community or school. Thus, the need for the introduction of gadgets to children from an early age is because today all activities use the gadgets so his son is not outdated when he is meeting with his friends. Although parents also have concerns about gadgets for fear of deviating in their use, parents will be more worried when their children do not know the name of the gadgets so that children do not experience setbacks in digital gadgets (Plowman, 2015). Because

parents have no preparation and have little concern for these gadgets, parents will seek information and learn about the use of the gadgets through adults and others and provide assistance to their children when using the gadgets. This is done to avoid unwanted things and shape the child into a wise use.

(ii)   Content Discussion

Parents will discuss applications or content that can be accessed by their children. It aims to make children critical consumers of media. Application of this discussion most parents will tell the application that can and cannot be accessed by the child. In addition, parents will provide understanding and reasons when the application or content is not accessible to children. Following Prasanti (2016) parents need to participate in discussions when children use gadgets with give a proper and good explanation. Supported by Rode (2009) describes one of the roles of parents in the digital age is that parents provide clear boundaries to children about things that should and should not be done when using digital gadgets.

When in use the child sees less appropriate content then the father does not immediately replace it but the father will ask about the content and then provide understanding and understanding to the child that the content is not good then ask the child to replace the content. Not much different from the father, the mother does not immediately scold her child but gives understanding to her child. According to Padilla-walker *et al.* (2012), parents began to discuss the benefits and disadvantages of content such as sexual content or violence after the child watched the video. So, a discussion with children, about topics can reduce the possibility of unwanted behaviour or attitudes (Nathanson and Botta, 2003).

(iii)   Search and Select Content

Parents will first find content that suits their children. Parents who have 2-3 years of age will first find content that can be watched by their children and then the child is given the freedom to have videos that they want to access, but when the video contains content that is less appropriate for their age, the parents will replace the video without any resistance from the child. In another case when the child is 4 years old, the child can already Search and select the content you want to watch through voice. Even so, parents will keep an eye on the content that will be accessed by children provided that the spectacle contains guidance for children when watching it. When children seem to want to watch less appropriate content, parents will provide a clear reason and understanding of cause and effect why the content cannot be seen because often children show rejection by asking for a cause or reason. In contrast to the study conducted by Dias *et al.* (2016), mothers tend to be more restrictive in general and control the content, whereas fathers can be more flexible and less restrictive. According to Padilla-walker *et al.* (2012), as children get older, parents learn to understand and accept their children's choices as one way to give confidence to the child.

(iv)   Notify the Content

At the time of this assistance, parents do not forget to inform and explain the contents of the content that children will watch. According to them, this content or content notification needs to be done because the child is in the golden age. A period in which early childhood will more quickly capture what is given by their parents to them through the five senses (Kochanska *et al.*, 2000). Parents will give explanations in various ways, when parents have children aged 2 years, parents will provide understanding or explanation in a simple and brief. It is intended that children easily understand the content or purpose of the content or application. But at that age,

parents more often provide stimulus to children in the form of providing questions related to the content of the video when the child is watching so that there is less occurrence of two-way discussions.

According to Gabrielle *et al.* (2013) and Roseberry *et al.* (2009) when a parent asks a question and encourages the child to story against the storyline then it can help that child aged 2 years of mastering vocabulary in videos and understanding the content. It's another matter when the child is 3-4 years old, parents will discuss the content and application more complexly. So, before the child sees the video, the parents will explain the content or story of the video, then the parents will repeat the story when the child has finished watching it and relate the content to the child's daily life. In addition, at that age the child can already ask about the contents of the content then there will be a conversation and a two-way discussion (Broekman *et al.*, 2016; Clark, 2011). So, parents will not allow their children to focus on using the gadgets but parents will start a conversation by asking about the content or content of the video they are watching. According to Gabrielle *et al.* (2013) and Roseberry *et al.* (2009) when parents ask questions and encourage the child to the story against the storyline it can help a child who is 3 years old master the 45 vocabulary in the video and understand the content.

3.2.2. Restrictive mediation

Restrictive mediation to parents shows that parents do not fully give freedom to their children including fathers. The father does not give freedom to his son when using gadgets at home. So that parents will apply restrictions in the form of time, distance, content, applications, and monitoring.

(i) Time Restrictive

The time restriction made by parents to their children is to reduce excessive use of gadgets so that children can do other activities. Almost all parents provide time restrictions as accompaniment when parents are at home. The time limit given by parents to their children varies from 15 minutes to 2 hours a day. The restrictions imposed by these parents differ between fathers and mothers, where the mother gives the child a long time to use the gadgets about 30 minutes to 1 hour. While the father will give less time than the mother about 10-15 minutes.

The provision of this time limit also depends on the conditions of parents, children, and the environment. When parents are busy with other things then parents will give a time limit of 1 hour to 2 hours when parents are not busy then parents will give about 30 minutes so that parents and children can play or do other activities other than using the gadgets. Following Sundus's (2018) statement, the use of gadgets by children needs to be limited in the amount of time they spend. This is reinforced by Rosen *et al.* (2014) that a good amount of time for these children under 10 should be less than 40 minutes and 2 hours a day. added by Sergi *et al.* (2017) that the frequency of use is less than three times a day as well as one to three days per week.

(ii) Content Restrictive

Parents ' concerns about exposure to content that is not good and safe for children then encourage parents to make restrictions on content that can be accessed by children. Parents will tell what content needs to be avoided by children when they want to watch or play videos on their gadgets. There is some content restricted by parents that they think is less appropriate and less appropriate for early childhood. First, this violent content is limited by parents for fear that it will form when the child is an adult. In addition, gaming content due to content it contains someone who guides or directs the way the game, however, the problem with content gaming is it is a language that is

used less politely so it is less good when the child listens to it. Furthermore, eating content (*mukbang* content) is limited by parents to their children because it accentuates the sound when eating less under applicable norms.

The purpose of this content restriction is that children do not follow the content which can cause behaviour to form when the child is an adult. This is in line with Cheng *et al.* (2004) that parents set limits on violent and sexual content to children. Reinforced by Nikken and Jansz (2014) parents set limits on content such as movies, and music seen, heard, and used by their child. When the child accepts the rules imposed by the parents, it reduces the likelihood that the child will be exposed to inappropriate content (Shin, 2015).

(iii) Application Restrictive

Restrictions on applications made by parents differ from one another, such as some parents permitting their children to use the application game due to the application game The child will not find anything else outside the game while on the application *YouTube* the child will easily find diverse videos. However, some parents have permission to use *YouTube*, especially *YouTube* Kids because *YouTube* kids are safer and the content contains children's content such as children's cartoons. Not only that, but parents also highly anticipate that their children do not use social media applications, especially Facebook. Under Kumar *et al.* (2020) access to the App, certain content is also restricted this depends on parental rules. Children can be permitted to navigate applications from gadgets but not from online applications. This is to avoid and reduce children's exposure to online risks and also to prevent their children from becoming addicted. Moreover, children do not yet have self-control (Lee, 2013).

(iv) Distance Restrictive

Parents also limit the distance and position when the child uses the gadgets. The father gives a limit on the distance of the use of the gadgets, that is, the child is not allowed to use the gadgets by lying down or face down because it can affect the child's physical. So, he only allows his son to use the gadgets by sitting. But as with the mother, the mother will permit the child to use the gadgets while lying or sitting as long as the placement of the gadgets is not close to the child's eyes or leaned against objects. According to Moll and Tomasello (2004), the distance of the child's eyes to the screen is less than 30 centimetres, if more than that will cause minus eyes or other eye disorders.

(v) Monitoring

The monitoring carried out by parents of their children was different in this study. For children aged 2-3 years, parents give their children confidence because they are sure that their children will not see content or access applications that are less appropriate for their age. Unlike parents who have children aged 4 years, parents will provide more protection to their children by using the protected application or activating protection on the application so that children can view content or access applications that have been set by their parents. Then, the three families in this study more closely monitor the use of gadgets in older siblings over the age of 6 years because the age of the child has begun to recognize social media so that parents will see the search on the gadgets.

3.2.3 Co-viewing mediation

Mentoring together is a forum for parents to get to know each other so that parents not only provide Restrictive mediation and active mediation but also accompany and use gadgets together with their children some parents will not give gadgets to their children when they are busy with homework, but mothers and fathers will choose to leave homework. In contrast to research conducted by Wahyuningtyas *et al.* (2022). the reason

parents give gadgets to their children is to calm down when the child is fussy and give free time to parents so that they can do household chores. Parents never allow their children to use their gadgets but there must be someone who accompanies the child. Fathers and mothers work together to assist and maintain children in accessing gadgets so that their use remains monitored and safe. When parents are busy, parents will ask for help from other families, such as older siblings or aunts to accompany and supervise. Even so, parents have informed the rules applied by the child's parents to his family. So that parents give confidence to other families to accompany their children when using gadgets.

In addition to getting to know, Co-viewing mediation is also a place for fathers and mothers to increase trust in each other. This can be seen from the findings that for all families who have children aged 2 years to 4 years, this accompaniment is very useful in increasing the emotional closeness between children and parents, especially fathers. The father participated in this co-viewing mediation to replace the less time with the child so that the child's Co-viewing mediation becomes one way for the dad to spend time with the child to increase closeness to each other. So, in this case, the role of the father is not only to monitor but the father needs to be involved and show equal participation with the mother in accompanying and caring for the child (Wijayanti and Fauziah, 2020). When mothers and fathers provide support to each other, the interaction of children using gadgets will be more effective (McDaniel and Radesky, 2018).

4. CONCLUSION

Parents not only use Restrictive mediation but also collaboration active mediation, Restrictive mediation, and Co-viewing mediation for managing the use of gadgets for children. Active mediation is applied by parents, namely, introducing gadgets, discussing content, searching and selecting content, and informing or explaining the content. Then in Restrictive mediation, parents provide restrictions in the form of time, distance, applications, content, and monitoring. In this Co-viewing mediation, fathers and mothers work together to accompany the use of gadgets on their children and will not allow their children to use gadgets without adult supervision. With parents collaborating on the assistance, this gadget can be useful for children, especially in developing and optimizing their development, and can reduce the negative impact caused by the use of gadgets.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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