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Extending Opportunities for Learning: The Role of Digital Media in Early Education

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Abstract We use evidence from four research projects conducted in preschools and in homes to address the following questions: Is it important that young children learn to use digital media? Which digital media are best suited to their needs? Can digital media provide opportunities for learning? By describing and examining children's experiences at home and in preschool settings we have identified how factors such as their own preferences, the people in their lives, and the cultural practices of the different environments in which they spend time shape their encounters with technology. We conclude that there is potential for digital media to extend the possibilities for children's learning. Many people believe that children need to become competent users of digital media to avoid disadvantage or marginalisation and to become assured, discriminating and effective members of society. For others, the ubiquity of these technologies has led to concerns about the ways in which they are seen to exert influence on the lives of young children. Like it or not, most people would agree that children's experiences with technology – whether for play, learning, or communication – will have significant implications for their future lives. We prefer to engage with this transformation rather than seek to establish a technology-free version of the past in the present. Nevertheless, we are aware that some of these changes are driven by the marketisation of education a rhetoric of progress through technology and sometimes inflated claims by media and technology industries.

Later in this chapter we describe some of our concerns about the use of digital media in preschool settings. We are not inclined to base a general denunciation on these shortcomings, but prefer to consider the contribution that thoughtful use can make to young children's learning and how this might be achieved, while recognizing the need for balance in children's activities.
Keywords: Media, Learning, Early Childhood

INTRODUCTION

In the increasingly rapid era of globalization and digitalization, education is experiencing significant transformation in various aspects. One of the most striking developments is the integration of digital media in the learning process, especially in early childhood education. Digital media offers tremendous opportunities to enrich the learning experience, enabling access to a wider and more varied range of educational resources, and supporting more interactive and engaging teaching methods. The importance of early childhood education cannot be doubted. At this stage, children are in a critical period of cognitive, emotional and social development. Therefore, the methods and tools used in their education must be carefully designed to support optimal growth. Digital media, with all its potential, has a significant role in creating a conducive and enjoyable learning environment for children.

In this context, digital media includes various tools and platforms, such as educational applications, educational games, learning videos, and other interactive devices. Each type of media has its own advantages in supporting the teaching and learning process. For example, educationalapps can be tailored to individual student needs, providing a more personalized and adaptive learning experience. Meanwhile, educational games can increase learning motivation in a fun and challenging way. However, behind all the positive potential offered by digital media, there are challenges and risks that need to be considered. Excessive or inappropriate use of digital media can disrupt children's development, cause dependence on technology, and reduce healthy social interactions. Therefore, it is important for educators and parents to understand the appropriate way to utilize digital media as an educational tool. This research aims to explore the role of digital media in early childhood education, identify its benefits and challenges, and provide practical recommendations for educators and parents in optimizing the use of digital media. Thus, it is hoped that digital media can be used

effectively to expand learning opportunities for children, without ignoring other important aspects of development. This research methodology involves a comprehensive literature review as well as field observations in several early childhood education institutions. In addition, interviews with educators, parents and children were also conducted to gain a more holistic perspective regarding the use of digital media in education. The data obtained was analyzed qualitatively to identify trends, patterns and implications of digital media use in the context of early childhood education. It is hoped that the results of this research will provide deeper insight into how digital media can be used optimally in early childhood education. Apart from that, this research also aims to provide practical guidance for educators and parents in using digital media wisely and effectively. Thus, digital media is not only an educational tool, but also a means to enrich and broaden children's learning experiences.

One important aspect that will be discussed in this research is the impact of digital media on children's cognitive development. Several studies show that appropriate use of digital media can improve cognitive skills, such as problem solving, critical thinking, and creativity. However, it is important to ensure that the content presented via digital media is appropriate to the child's age and developmental stage. Apart from cognitive impacts, this research will also explore the influence of digital media on children's social and emotional development. Interactions that occur through digital media, whether with educational content or with other users, can influence children's social development. Therefore, it is important to understand how digital media can be used to support positive social interactions and build children's emotional skills. In the context of formal education, digital media also offers opportunities for innovation in teaching methods. Educators can utilize a variety of digital tools to create a more interactive and engaging learning environment. For example, the use of interactive whiteboards, digital simulations, and instructional videos can help explain difficult concepts in a way that is easier for children to understand. However, the integration of digital media in education also requires adequate infrastructure support. The availability of appropriate hardware and software, as well as stable internet access, are important factors in ensuring the effective use of digital media. Apart from that, training for educators in using digital tools is also needed to maximize the potential of digital media in learning. Through this

research, it is hoped that effective strategies can be found to overcome these challenges, so that digital media can be used optimally in early childhood education. Apart from that, this research also aims to increase awareness of the important role of digital media in education and inspire innovation in teaching methods.

Thus, this research not only focuses on the benefits and challenges of digital media, but also on practical solutions that can be implemented in early childhood education. In this digital era, it is important for us to use technology wisely and innovatively, so that it can provide wider and more beneficial learning opportunities for children. In conclusion, digital media has great potential to enrich the learning experiences of young children. However, its use must be done carefully and wisely, taking into account the child's needs and developmental stage. Through this research, it is hoped that effective ways can be found to utilize digital media to support early childhood education, so that it can provide maximum benefits for their development.

Digital media has great potential to expand learning opportunities for young children. However, their use must be done carefully and in a balanced manner, taking into account the child's developmental needs and ensuring that digital media is used as a supporting tool, not a substitute for direct interaction and physical activity.

THEORITICAL REVIEW

The use of digital media in early childhood education has become an increasingly important topic in recent decades. Digital media offers new opportunities to improve the learning process and provides access to various educational resources that are not limited by time and space.

1. The Role of Technology in Early Childhood Education

Technology has changed the way children learn and interact with the world around them. The use of digital media can provide higher cognitive stimulation through interesting interactive content, which is designed to support children's development in various aspects. Digital media allows wider and easier access to various educational resources. Educational apps, learning videos, and educational games are some examples of how digital media can be used to enhance children's learning experiences. One of the main advantages of digital

media is its ability to provide interactive learning. This interactivity can increase student engagement and make learning more interesting and effective. Digital media allows for more personalized learning and is tailored to each child's individual needs. Learning apps and software can be tailored to each child's ability level and learning style, so they can learn at their own pace. The use of digital media in early childhood education also helps children develop digital skills from an early age. These skills are especially important in today's digital era, where technology is an integral part of everyday life. Digital media can provide rich multisensory learning experiences. By combining visual, audio and tactile elements, digital media can help children process information better and improve their understanding of the material being studied. Digital platforms often offer features that encourage collaboration and social interaction. Kids can work together on online projects, share ideas, and learn from each other in a supportive virtual environment. One of the other advantages of digital media is its ability to provide real-time evaluation and feedback. This allows teachers and parents to monitor children's progress and provide timely help when needed digital media can also provide significant support for children with special needs. Specialized software and applications can help overcome various learning challenges and provide a more inclusive learning environment.

The use of digital media supports a project-based learning approach, where children can explore topics of interest in depth and develop research and problem- solving skills Digital media provides various tools and platforms that can enhance children's creativity. From image processing software to music creation applications, digital media allows children to express themselves in new and innovative ways. Even though it offers many benefits, the use of digital media in early childhood education also faces various challenges. One of the main challenges is ensuring that the content used is safe and appropriate for children, It is important to balance the use of digital media with offline activities which are also important for children's development. Excessive screen time can interfere with physical play time and direct social interactions that are important for a child's holistic development.

2. The Role of Teachers and Parents

Teachers and parents play an important role in directing the use of digital media. They must ensure that digital media is used as a tool that supports learning, not as a substitute for direct interaction and physical activities, The government and educational institutions need to develop clear policies and guidelines regarding the use of digital media in early childhood education. These guidelines must cover aspects of security, privacy and child welfare. Adequate training for teachers is essential to ensure effective use of digital media. Teachers need to be trained in using technology and integrating digital media into the curriculum in meaningful ways, There is still much that needs to be researched regarding the long-term impacts of using digital media in early childhood education. More research is needed to understand how digital media affects children's cognitive, social, and emotional development.

METHOD

Research methods are process activities in the form of data collection, analysis and providing interpretations related to research objectives. However, according to John Creswell, the definition of research is a gradual, cyclical process that begins with identifying the problem or issue to be researched. Meanwhile, according to Steven Dukeshire and Jennifer Thurlow, research is a systematic way to collect data and present the results. The research method is a process of activities in the form of data collection, analysis and providing interpretations related to the research objectives. So, it can be concluded that a research method is a process used to solve a problem systematically.

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative according to Muchtar. The descriptive qualitative research method is a method that researchers use to search for information or research theories at a certain time. The qualitative method used by the author as a research instrument and analysis is carried out continuously from the beginning of the research to data analysis. This type of research is descriptive and this researcher tends to use analysis in qualitative research with more emphasis on process and meaning by using a theoretical basis as a guide to focus research based on facts in the field. The role of the theoretical basis is very important to provide a broad picture of the research environment and as material for discussing research results. Qualitative research

has somewhat limited research topics. Qualitative research requires researchers to participate in the conditions or events being researched, because the results of qualitative research require in-depth analysis by the researcher.

The aim of qualitative research is to explain phenomena as deeply as possible by collecting as much information as possible, showing the importance of depth and detail in the material studied. In this research method, the approach used is descriptive, the type of qualitative research is descriptive research which aims to describe or describe a problem. The aim of descriptive research is to describe accurately and systematically a population, situation or phenomenon. This type of research can answer what, where, when and how questions, but not why questions. Unlike experimental research, researchers do not control or manipulate any variables, only observe and measure them.

The data analysis used in this research method is the Spradley model data analysis technique. Spradley also explained the steps in qualitative data analysis, Spradley explained that there are 4 (four) steps. They are:a. Domain analysis is domain analysis, i.e. the process by which we obtain an overview of the research topic or social problem that will be appointed as a research topic, b. Analysis Taxonomy is an analysis of all data collected based on a given domain. With Thus, through this taxonomic analysis, the area defined by the researcher as the closing period can besubdivided and deepened.

In this analysis, the research focus is limited to certain areas which are very useful when trying to describe or explain the phenomenon/object that is the subject of the original research. Spradley suggests that the selection or limitation of focus will be based on certain considerations, c. The purpose of component analysis is to find out specifically all the elements that make up the research data area.

Component analysis is not about organizing similarities in a domain into domains, but only those that have existence or contrast. This information is sought through observation, interviews and selected documentation. With this triangulation data collection technique, several specific and different dimensions can be found for each element. For example, taxonomic analysis uncovers different levels and types of formation, viz. Cultural theme analysis, in this phase the researcher builds relationships between scientific fields whose characteristics are already known. The relationship between data intervals then becomes the

conclusion for all research data obtained. Analyzing something or discovering cultural things is actually an attempt to find a "thread" that integrates with existing fields. By finding common threads in the results of domain, taxonomy and component analysis, a "structural structure" of situations/objects of social study that were previously vague or unclear.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Early childhood is a group of humans who are in the process of growth and development, so they have special growth and development patterns related to the stages of physical, cognitive, social emotional, artistic, language and religious growth and development. Early childhood is a human being who still has potential that must be fulfilled. Early childhood has different characteristics from adults. They are always active, enthusiastic, and curious about what they see, hear, and feel; It's as if they never stop experimenting and learning.

Early childhood is egocentric, naturally curious, social, unique, has lots of fantasies, and has a short memory, they also have great potential for learning. Early childhood is children aged 0-6 years. At that age, development occurs very rapidly. Based on research results, around 40% of human development occurs at an early age, therefore early age is seen as very important. The principles of child development include 1) that children develop as a whole; 2) that development occurs in an orderly sequence; 3) that development occurs at varying levels within and between children; 4) that new developments are based on previous developments; 5) that development affects sequentially. Development and growth are an inseparable part of human life, which will continue to change due to supporting factors. The two processes of growth and development will take place continuously, where in turn the two processes will depend on each other. As long as the human life process takes place, growth and development also take place not only in physical but psychological factors, so that until death the process will stop. This is in accordance with a belief regarding development that will last a lifetime, although there is another perspective that influences it, put forward by life-span development expert Paul Baltes, (in Santrok, 2011) where the life- span perspective views human development as lasting a lifetime, multidimensional, multidirectional, plastic, multidisciplinary and contextual, and is a process involving growth, maintenance and regulation of decline.

Early age is a very important period for a child's development which can be called the golden period. During this period, children will experience very rapid development, both physical, intellectual, social, emotional and language development. Early childhood are unique individuals, why is that, because early childhood are born with different potentials, interests and talents that Allah SWT has given them. Let's look at children who are born as twins, they look the same, don't they, from a physical perspective, but in terms of their level of ability and intelligence they are very different. Education experts agree that the golden period only occurs once throughout the span of human life, so during this period children experience a critical age, which is meant by critical age, namely the golden period which determines subsequent development as a stage for the development of various competencies possessed by children. Education at this time is a development effort aimed at children from birth to the age of six.

Education is an effort to increase superior human resources and character. Many things influence children's learning outcomes, one of which is conditions that are conducive to the learning environment. To create a conducive learning environment, it is necessary to manage the learning environment. Teachers have an important role in managing the learning environment. A conducive learning atmosphere or environment will influence the student teaching and learning process, tending to encourage children to study calmly and concentrate. Learning environment management can be interpreted as a process of coordinating and integrating various environmental components that can influence changes in children's behavior so that it can be facilitated well. Good learning environment management can achieve effective and efficient learning goals. Based on Article 31 of the 1945 Constitution, every citizen has the right to receive a decent education. In Republic of Indonesia Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, it is stated that education is carried out democratically and fairly and is not discriminatory by upholding human rights, religious values, cultural values and national pluralism (UU SISDIKNAS, 2000). This means that every Indonesian citizen has the right to receive education provided by the government, both citizens with physical/mental limitations and normal citizens. Taking an example from a problem researched by (Tirtayanti & Sulastri, 2015), namely showing cases of early childhood that were detected in several kindergartens in the city of Singaraja, Bali. The results of this research in 2013 detected disruptive behavior displayed by students in

Kindergarten, with cases of ADHD detected at 5.43%, ODD at 2.88%, and CD at 0.64% from meetings), b) Parent gatherings, c) parent training (parenting) and, d) children's activities with parents.

Early childhood education is education aimed at facilitating the overall growth and development of children in accordance with aspects of child development starting from religious and moral, cognitive, fine and gross motoric, language, social emotional and artistic aspects. The main goal is to help children's physical, cognitive, social and emotional development from an early age. Early childhood education is often done through play and social interaction, which helps children learn in a fun and natural way. Early childhood education programs usually include a variety of activities, such as playing, singing, reading, and creative pursuits, and help children develop basic social and cognitive skills. By paying close attention to early childhood education, we can help children build a strong foundation for their future development. Early childhood education is an initial educational institution that can optimize early childhood through the learning process and develop the potential that exists within children. Education at this time is a development effort aimed at children from birth to six years of age.

Early Childhood Education has received special attention in the world of education in Indonesia in recent years, this is proven by the proliferation of PAUD which is established in every municipality, district, sub-district, sub-district and private sector. Early childhood education plays a very important role because it is fundamental education for a human being at the beginning of their life. To be able to provide good quality education, it is very necessary to understand the concept of Early Childhood Education for teachers, parents and PAUD education units. In this article the author tries to present important things related to the concept of early childhood education. Teaching young children is easy and difficult. Sometimes we provide expensive learning facilities and hope that children will learn a lot, but in reality the children don't learn. Sometimes with very simple and cheap toys, children are very interested and want to know a lot about the toy and its working mechanism. Playing while learning, where the essence of play animates every learning activity is very important for PAUD. Early childhood learning uses the essence of play. The essence of play includes feelings of joy, democracy, activity, no compulsion, and freedom. Learning should be structured in such a way that it is fun, makes children interested in taking part and is not forced. The teacher includes

educational elements in these play activities, so that children unconsciously learn various things. PAUD learning materials are also very varied. There is an opinion that states that PAUD only develops logical thinking.

3. Digital Revolution And Education

The digital revolution refers to the transformation that occurs as a result of the rapid development of digital technology. In the context of education, this revolution has brought significant changes in the way we access, convey and manage information and knowledge. The digital revolution includes not only the adoption of new technologies but also changes in educational approaches and methodologies, The Influence of the Digital Revolution on Education:

a. Wide Access to Information: Digital technology has opened the door to unlimited access to information. In the past, students had to rely on physical libraries and textbooks for information. Now, with the internet, information can be accessed easily through various sources such as e-books, online journals, educational videos, and online courses. Platforms like Khan Academy, Coursera, and edX provide access to courses from top universities around the world.
b. Distance Learning: The COVID-19 pandemic is clear evidence of how digital technology allows education to continue even though face-to-face meetings are not possible. Platforms such as Zoom, Google Classroom, and Microsoft Teams have become key tools in distance learning. This shows the flexibility and adaptability of the education system in the digital era.
c. Personalization of Learning: Technology enables personalization in education, where learning materials can be tailored to each student's needs and learning pace. Learning management systems (LMS) and adaptive platforms use data to assess student performance and provide relevant materials based on their progress. This helps create a more effective and efficient learning experience.
d. Interactivity and Engagement: The use of technology such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) has increased student interactivity and engagement in the learning process. For example, students can explore history through VR simulations or learn human

anatomy with interactive 3D models. This technology makes learning more interesting and in-depth.

e. Global Collaboration: The digital revolution also enables global collaboration between students and educators. Through digital communication tools, students can collaborate on projects with peers from different parts of the world, broadening their perspectives and building cross-cultural collaborative skills. Online discussion forums and social media are also spaces for sharing knowledge and ideas.

4. The Role of Digital Media in Early Childhood Education

Digital technology has become an integral part of modern life, including in the field of education. Young children now grow up in an environment filled with digital devices such as tablets, smartphones and computers. The use of digital media in early childhood education offers various benefits that can support their development. However, its use also needs to be monitored wisely to ensure maximum positive impact. The following are some of the main roles of digital media in early childhood education:

a. Access to Diverse Learning Resources: Digital media provides access to a variety of learning resources that can enrich children's educational experiences. Through the internet, children can access educational videos, interactive learning applications, e- books, and much more. For example, platforms like YouTube Kids offer a variety of video content that is educational and age-appropriate for children.
b. Interactive and Interesting Learning: Digital media allows learning to be more interactive and interesting compared to traditional methods. Educational apps often use games, animations, and interactive stories that can make learning a fun experience for children. This helps maintain their interest and attention for longer.
c. Digital Skills Development: Introducing children to technology early helps them develop important digital skills. Using devices such as tablets and computers teaches children how to operate basic technology, which will be very useful in the future. Additionally, some apps even introduce basic programming concepts through simple and fun games.
d. Personalization of Learning: One of the advantages of digital media is its ability to adapt learning to individual needs. Educational apps and programs often have

features that can adjust the difficulty level and type of content based on a child's abilities and progress. This allows children to learn at their own pace and accept appropriate challenges.

e. Encourages Creativity and Self-Expression: Many digital applications are designed to encourage children's creativity. For example, digital drawing and painting, music creation, and interactive story creation applications enable children to express themselves in new and innovative ways. This not only develops artistic skills but also increases their self-confidence.

f. Collaborative Learning: Digital media also supports collaborative learning. Educational apps and platforms often provide features that allow kids to work together on projects, share ideas, and learn from each other. This helps develop social skills and the ability to work in a team, which is very important for early childhood development.

5. Benefits of Digital Media in Early Childhood Education:

a. Increasing Interest and Motivation for Learning: Digital media, with interactive and interesting content, can increase children's interest and motivation in learning. Educational applications designed with game elements (gamification) can make the learning process more fun. For example, applications that teach reading skills through interactive picture stories or math games that combine challenges and rewards can motivate children to study harder.

b. Expanding Access to Learning Resources:Digital media allows access to a variety of learning resources that may not be available locally. Children can access educational videos, digital books and learning applications from various corners of the world. This helps enrich their knowledge and provides a broader perspective on the world. Supports Individualized Learning: Every child has a different learning speed and interests.

c. Digital media allows personalization of learning, where material can be adapted to the needs and abilities of each child. Educational apps can set difficulty levels based on a child's development, so they can learn in the way that is most effective for them.

d. Developing Digital Skills Early:The use of digital media in early childhood education also helps them develop basic digital skills. These skills are essential in today's digital era and will be a valuable asset when they grow up. Children

learn to use digital devices, operate applications, and understand basic technology concepts.

6. Challenges in Using Digital Media in Early Childhood

The use of digital media in early childhood is a quite complex topic and has its own challenges. Some of the main challenges include:

a. Inappropriate Content: Much digital content is not specifically designed for young children and may contain inappropriate material such as violence, strong language or inappropriate images.
b. Excessive Screen Time: Young children are vulnerable to the negative effects of excessive screen exposure, such as sleep disturbances, lack of physical activity, and mental health problems such as anxiety.
c. Lack of Supervision: Parents may find it difficult to supervise the content their children consume digitally, especially as children can easily access inappropriate content without adequate supervision.
d. Addiction: Excessive use of digital media can make children dependent on electronic devices, disrupting the development of their social, cognitive and motor skills.
e. Lack of Social Interaction: Children may spend too much time in front of screens instead of interacting with others face-to-face, which is important for their social development.
f. Criticism and Bullying: Digital media can also be a place where young children are vulnerable to criticism or bullying from fellow children or even from adults.
g. Limitations in Skill Development: Relying too much on digital media for entertainment or learning can reduce a child's ability to develop creativity, imagination and fine motor skills.

7. Effective Strategies for Using Digital Media in Early Childhood

Using digital media effectively in early childhood requires a careful and planned approach. Here are some strategies that can help:

a. Choose Appropriate Content: Choose apps, games and digital content designed specifically for young children. Make sure the content supports their development in a positive way, such as language learning, cognitive skills and social interactions.
b. Screen Time Limits: Set reasonable time limits for digital media use. The general recommendation is no more than 1 hour per day for children aged 2-5 years. Make sure this time is spent on useful content and accompanied by an adult.
c. Monitor and Engage: Always monitor what your child is doing on digital devices. Involve yourself in their interactions with the media, ask about what they are learning or doing, and provide guidance if necessary.
d. Prioritize Human Interaction: Although digital media can provide educational benefits, direct interaction with parents, siblings, and peers remains important for a child's social development. Ensure enough time for playing outside, talking, and interacting face to face.
e. Model Positive Behavior: Children learn from what they see adults do. Show how to use technology in a positive and healthy way. For example, limit cell phone use during family time or don't use devices when eating together.
f. Teach Digital Awareness: Starting from an early age, teach children about digital awareness, such as how to behave safely online, recognizing inappropriate content, and respecting other people's privacy.
g. Choose Media that Encourages Creativity: Choose applications or games that encourage children to be creative, such as digital painting applications or role-playing games. This can help build their creative skills.
h. Regularly evaluate: Conduct regular evaluations of the applications and games your child uses. Make sure they stay relevant, useful, and safe.

By implementing these strategies, you can ensure that early childhood use of digital media is not only safe, but also adds significant value to their development

CONCLUSION

The role of digital media in early childhood education has become an increasingly important topic in recent years. This paper discusses how digital media can expand learning opportunities for young children, highlighting the benefits, challenges and optimal strategies for implementation. Digital media offers a variety of benefits in early childhood education, including access to diverse educational resources, more interactive and engaging learning, and the ability to adapt learning to individual needs. Digital tools can increase children's engagement and strengthen understanding of basic concepts through visualization and interactivity. The use of digital media can help overcome educational disparities by providing wider access to learning materials for children from various socio- economic backgrounds. With easier access to technology, children from underserved communities can receive the same educational opportunities as those in more supportive environments. Apart from providing educational material, digital media is also important in developing digital skills from an early age. Children who are accustomed to using technology will be better prepared to face challenges in a future that increasingly relies on technological skills and digital literacy. Digital media allows for personalized learning, where materials and activities can be adapted to each child's pace and learning style. This allows teachers to pay special attention to each child, ensuring that all students have an optimal learning experience. Despite its many benefits, the use of digital media in early childhood education also faces several challenges. These challenges include a lack of technology infrastructure in some areas, training needs for educators, and concerns about excessive screen time for children. To maximize the benefits of digital media, an effective implementation strategy needs to be implemented. This includes providing adequate training for teachers, curricular development.

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