

Parenting Patterns in the Digital Era in Career Families and Their Impact on Children's Social Interaction

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ABSTRACT

The development of digital technology has transformed parenting practices in modern families, especially in career families (dual-earner families) who face time constraints due to work demands. This study aims to analyze parenting patterns in the digital era in career families and their impact on social interactions of young children. The method used is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) referring to the PRISMA guidelines, through a search of scientific articles in the Scopus, SINTA, and Google Scholar databases within the period 2019–2024. The review results show that parents' time constraints drive the emergence of digital babysitting practices, which is the delegation of parenting functions to digital devices as an adaptive mechanism to fatigue and time compression. This practice affects the reduction of dialogic interaction (serve-and-return communication) between parents and children. These conditions have implications for the decline in children's social competence, such as empathy, the ability to share, emotion regulation, and interaction skills with peers in the early childhood education environment. In addition, excessive screen exposure shapes tendencies toward individualistic behavior and patterns of instant gratification in children

INTRODUCTION

The massive development of digital technology in the last decade has disrupted various social institutions, including the smallest institution in society, which is the family. In the context of Educational Sociology, the family functions as a primary socialization agent that lays the foundation for social interaction, character formation, and the internalization of values in Early Childhood (PAUD) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Parsons, 1955). However, in today's digital era, that traditional socialization function has experienced a radical shift. Gadgets and digital media now play an increasingly dominant role in children's daily routines, creating a new condition known as digital parenting (Mascheroni et al., 2018; Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020).

This shift in socialization patterns becomes crucial when faced with the reality of changes in the structure of modern family economics. Economic demands and professional emancipation have given rise to the phenomenon of dual-earner families or career families, where both fathers and mothers spend most of their time in the public sphere or at work (Chai et al., 2021). This condition results in significant time constraints for parents to engage in quality face-to-face interactions with their children. Consequently, many working parents tend to adopt permissive digital parenting as a defense mechanism. Various studies have found that career parents often use gadgets as "digital babysitters" to distract their children, minimize conflict, or simply gain a break after a long day of work (Nathanson & Beyens, 2018; Radesky et al., 2020).

Dependence on digital babysitting raises sociological and psychological anxieties regarding the loss of interactive social interaction spaces in early childhood. Children's social abilities, such as empathy, emotion regulation, conflict resolution, and sharing skills (prosocial behavior), are ideally developed through two-way communication (serve-and-return communication) and physical play activities with parents and peers (Hinkell et al., 2022). Unfortunately, excessive and unsupervised leisure time (screen time) has been shown to replace those real-world interaction portions. Longitudinal research by Madigan et al. (2019) and sociological studies by Ribbens McCarthy (2021) confirm that passive screen exposure is strongly correlated with a decrease in social competence, a tendency toward individualistic attitudes, and social adaptation difficulties when children enter school environments (PAUD). Many studies have examined the negative impact of gadgets on the cognitive and motor development of young children. However, comprehensive reviews that dissect this phenomenon from the perspective of family sociology, especially among the group of career parents, are still very limited. Most research tends to view this issue from an individual-psychological standpoint, yet neglects to see that the adoption of digital parenting is a product of the negotiation of social-work structures that constrain modern parents (Clark, 2020).

This study aims to examine and synthesize previous literature through the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. Specifically, this study seeks to answer how career families negotiate changes in parenting patterns in the digital era and how these changes impact the social interaction patterns of early childhood. The synthesis from this study is expected to provide a theoretical

foundation for formulating digital parenting literacy policies that are more sensitive to the working class, while also helping early childhood education institutions design appropriate social interventions for children experiencing interaction deficits at home.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This shift in socialization patterns becomes crucial when faced with the reality of changes in the structure of modern family economics. Economic demands and professional emancipation have given rise to the phenomenon of dual-earner families or career families, where both fathers and mothers spend most of their time in the public sphere or at work (Chai et al., 2021). This condition results in significant time constraints for parents to engage in quality face-to-face interactions with their children. Consequently, many working parents tend to adopt permissive digital parenting as a defense mechanism. Various studies have found that career parents often use gadgets as "digital babysitters" to distract their children, minimize conflict, or simply gain a break after a long day of work (Nathanson & Beyens, 2018; Radesky et al., 2020).

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design by adapting the standard guidelines of Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (Page et al., 2021). The SLR approach was chosen to systematically identify, evaluate, and synthesize various empirical findings relevant to the study focus. Through this method, the literature review process is conducted comprehensively, transparently, and can be scientifically replicated. Specifically, this study examines the shift from conventional parenting patterns to parenting in the digital era (digital parenting) in the sociological context of career families, as well as its implications for the social interactions of early childhood (PAUD) children.

The literature review was conducted systematically through several reputable academic databases. To access international-scale literature, the Scopus database was used. Meanwhile, to accommodate the Indonesian national context, searches were carried out through SINTA and Google Scholar. The literature reviewed was limited to publications within the last five years (2019–2024), with the aim of capturing the latest dynamics related to the use of digital devices in households, especially during the post-pandemic period which accelerated the intensity of gadget use among young children. The search strategy was developed using Boolean logic operators (AND, OR) to improve the accuracy of results. In international literature, the keywords used include combinations of: "digital parenting", "screen time", "gadget usage", which are associated with "dual-earner family", "working parents", "career parents", as well as "early childhood", "preschooler", "kindergarten", and "social interaction", "social skill", "sociology of family". Meanwhile, for national literature, Indonesian equivalents of keywords are used such as "pola asuh digital" (digital parenting patterns), "pengasuhan masa digital" (child-rearing in the digital age), "keluarga karier" (career family), "orang tua pekerja" (working parents), "anak usia dini" (early childhood), "PAUD" (early childhood education), "interaksi sosial" (social

interaction), “sosiologi keluarga” (family sociology), and “modal sosial” (social capital).

To ensure the validity and relevance of the analysis unit, this study strictly applies inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria include: (1) original empirical research articles in the form of full papers that have undergone a peer-review process; (2) research focusing on early childhood (ages 3–6) within the context of families where both parents are working; (3) studies that discuss the relationship between the use of digital technology and children's social interactions, both at home and at school; and (4) articles available in full-text form and written in Indonesian or English. The exclusion criteria include: (1) articles that only discuss cognitive aspects without relevance to social dimensions; (2) research targeting age groups outside the early childhood category, such as adolescents; and (3) non-empirical publications such as opinions, essays, or popular books that are not research-based. To minimize bias and increase objectivity, the literature selection process is carried out through four stages following the PRISMA flow. The first stage is identification, which involves collecting all articles obtained from searches in various databases. At this stage, duplicate articles are also removed with the help of reference management software such as Mendeley or Zotero.

The second stage is screening, which is selecting articles based on the suitability of the title and abstract with the research focus. The third stage is eligibility, which is conducted through a thorough reading of the full text of the articles to ensure their compliance with the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The final stage is inclusion, which is the determination of the final articles that will be further analyzed in the research discussion.

qualitative, quantitative, and ethnographic approaches in examining the relationship between full-time working parents (dual-earner family) and the dynamics of social interaction of early childhood in the digital era. Through sociological thematic analysis, these findings were then classified into three main interrelated focuses, namely: (1) the negotiation of time and the emergence of digital babysitting practices in career families; (2) the sociological impact of digital caregiving on children's social interactions in early childhood education; and (3) the need for socio-educational engineering based on ecosystem partnership.

Time Negotiation and the Phenomenon of Digital Babysitting in Career Families

The idea of radical family sociology claims that time is the most scarce commodity or "capital" for the modern middle class. Studies by Chai et al. (2021) show that the phenomenon of dual-earner families faces severe time compression pressures after they transition from public spaces (workplaces) to domestic spaces. As a result of the double fatigue phenomenon (physical and emotional), smart device tools (such as tablets or smartphones) are no longer seen as entertainment instruments, but instead transform into substitute socialization agents or digital babysitters (Nathanson & Beyens, 2018). Research by Radesky et al. (2020) confirms that working parents operate digital screens as the main coping mechanism. These devices are believed to be very effective for distracting children, preventing tantrums, and providing a "downtime" for parents. From the lens of Social Practice Theory (Bourdieu), the habituation of delegating caregiving to intelligent machines has already become a socially legitimized adjustment practice within urban society classes (Clark, 2020). Although it functions to practically lighten domestic burdens, the literature agrees that this role compromise results in the loss of essential moments for the two-way interaction process (serve-and-return communication) between parents and children.

Sociological Impact of Digital Parenting on Children's Social Interaction in Early Childhood Education

The consequences of minimal dialogical communication in the household sphere become very evident when a child enters their first community, namely the early childhood education unit (PAUD). The formation of a "instant gratification" habit due to excessive screen time is completely contrary to the fundamental values of civil society, which demand empathy, patience, and turn-taking. A longitudinal study conducted by Madigan et al. (2019) revealed a negative linear correlation between the duration of passive device exposure and the achievement of social convention developmental milestones at ages 3-6. The loss of primary real-world interaction at home results in "social capital poverty." As a result, observations in preschool environments show a picture where children struggle to empathize when a peer falls, have low emotional resilience or easily explode when desires are delayed, and have reduced frequency of sharing educational play tools with their peers (Hinkell et al., 2022). Ribbens McCarthy (2021) adds that digital screen delegation shapes an isolative nature of

interaction, which sharply clashes with the 'Gotong Royong' indicator in early character education.

Socio-Educational Engineering Needs and Tripartite Education Mediation

The literature review does not recommend an approach that completely bans digital tools (being exclusively prohibitive), but rather recommends systemic engineering within the landscape of digital parenting patterns. The study by Mascheroni et al. (2018) emphasizes that children from career-oriented families greatly need Active Mediation programs. This mediation is a practice where career parents change the habit of children watching alone into a simultaneous watching and interacting activity (the concept of co-viewing in cyberspace). Furthermore, resolving the social discourse on parenting patterns should be institutionalized through the integration of the Tri-Center Education partnership. Early childhood education institutions take on a fundamental role in transferring parenting literacy (parenting education) to full-time workers. By accommodating formal schools that mediate parents' awareness of screen-viewing socialization spaces, early childhood education (PAUD) metamorphoses into a social deterrent in minimizing children's psychosocial lag from exposure to technological selfishness.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the systematic literature review that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the massive penetration of gadgets in the parenting of working families (dual-earner families) is not merely a reflection of a permissive neglect parenting style, but rather a form of structural compromise to the fatigue and time-compression exploitation of urban society. The practice of delegating primary caregiving to technological devices (the phenomenon of digital babysitting) has been shown to massively reduce both the quantity and quality of dialogic communication (serve-and-return communication) in private spaces.

Sociologically, the deficit of social interaction within the family is externalized into the degradation of competence or social capital when children socialize in secondary spheres, such as Early Childhood Education (PAUD). Excessive exposure to passive content results in the formation of egoistic habituation based on instant gratification, which in turn suppresses the initiative to share (prosocial behavior), the ability to compromise time (queue), and weakens children's empathy resilience in peer playgroups. Addressing this impact no longer concerns the dichotomous isolation of digital devices or personal psychology, but rather requires the improvement of large-scale sociological frameworks.

This research advocates the necessity of involving systemic partnerships across elements, namely career families, community environments, and early childhood education institutions. Preschool institutions are required to progress while serving as mediators of education for the concepts of Active Mediation and co-viewing literacy for parents; intervening in the negative impacts of the cyber world, while also safeguarding the fundamental social interaction rights essential during the critical developmental phase of the nation's young generation.

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