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The Role of Parents in Improving Children's Reading Skills in the Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the role of parents in enhancing children's reading skills in the digital era. The advancement of digital technology has significantly altered children's learning patterns, with the use of gadgets and digital media increasingly dominating daily activities. This situation presents both challenges and opportunities for children's literacy development, particularly regarding reading proficiency. Consequently, parental involvement is crucial in guiding, supporting, and fostering positive reading habits within the family environment. This research employs a literature review method with a theoretical approach, utilizing "listen-and-note" techniques. Data were gathered from various sources such as books, scholarly journals, and research articles relevant to the topics of parental roles and child literacy in the digital era. Data analysis involved examining, categorizing, and interpreting various theories and findings from previous studies to gain a comprehensive understanding. The study reveals that parents play a vital role as role models, guides, facilitators, and supervisors in improving their children's reading skills. Activities such as reading books aloud, creating a literacy-rich home environment, and supervising digital technology usage have been shown to boost reading interest, language proficiency, and reading comprehension. Furthermore, digital literacy is a critical aspect that needs to be cultivated so that children can use technology wisely and educationally. In conclusion, the successful enhancement of children's reading skills in the digital era relies heavily on active parental involvement and a supportive family environment. Collaboration among parents, schools, and the community is essential to building a sustainable literacy culture.

Keywords: parents, reading skills, children's literacy, digital age, literary studies.

INTRODUCTION

Parents play a crucial role in shaping a child’s literacy development, particularly in fostering reading skills and providing language stimulation (Mauluddia, Yulia, 2024). One proven, positive approach involves reading activities that cultivate an interest in reading, strengthen the parent-child bond, and offer children tangible experiences. Parents serve as primary role models, as their words and actions set an example for their children (Aulinda, 2020). Family based literacy serves as a benchmark for enhancing the reading abilities of family members; consequently, literacy education should primarily target parents, who act as motivators in fostering a culture of reading within the home (Rahesi et al., 2017).

Digital technology continues to stimulate life today without stopping. Both children and parents use digital media from various devices such as iPads, cellphones and laptops. It often happens that parents and children prioritize spending time with digital devices rather than cultivating the quality of togetherness in the family. This can cause attraction problems with the device. Therefore, the role of parents needs to follow up on this problem by educating and creating a positive family environment in the digital era (Fatmawati,

2019). Children born in families with higher economic levels tend to understand more about how technology works than children born in lower economic classes. Moreover, parents never discuss and discuss technology's impact on developing human literacy (Sukmawati et al., 2017).

Numerous studies indicate that parental involvement significantly impacts children's literacy development. Reading activities play a crucial role in fostering reading skills, interest, and the motivation to learn (Astrianti et al., 2024). While many parents have the time, they are often hindered by a lack of effective strategies and limited knowledge regarding literacy. Vygotsky's theory highlights the importance of the parental role in enhancing children's abilities (Qiptiyah, 2024). Addressing this gap, this study aims to examine the role of parents in supporting children's reading activities in the digital era and to identify the strategies families employ to develop reading literacy amidst the rising use of digital media. Literacy development in children is a key indicator of future educational success. Strong reading skills help children comprehend information, develop critical thinking abilities, and improve academic performance. However, various research findings indicate that children's interest in reading in Indonesia remains low compared to other countries.

This situation presents a distinct challenge for parents and educators to devise effective strategies for fostering a reading culture from an early age. Reading skills do not emerge automatically during childhood; rather, they require consistent stimulation from the surrounding environment particularly the family, which serves as a child's first educational setting. In the digital era, the challenge of improving reading skills has become increasingly complex. Children today are more familiar with various digital devices that offer instant entertainment, such as videos, online games, and social media. Without proper guidance, the use of such technology can reduce the time children spend reading and learning. Nevertheless, digital technology also holds great potential to support literacy development if utilized wisely. Various reading apps, e-books, and digital learning platforms can serve as effective tools for fostering children's interest in reading. Therefore, parents need to play an active role in guiding and supervising their children, as well as leveraging technology to support literacy. With optimal parental involvement, digital technology can go beyond mere entertainment to become a tool for enhancing reading skills and broadening children's horizons from an early age.

The role of parents also encompasses the ability to strike a balance between technology use and conventional literacy activities, such as reading printed books. Parents need to establish clear rules regarding screen time to prevent children from becoming overly dependent on digital devices. Furthermore, parents can guide children toward digital content that is educational and appropriate for their developmental stage. In this way, technology serves not merely as a source of entertainment but also as an effective learning tool. Consistent parental guidance helps children develop positive reading habits, improve their concentration, and cultivate a more disciplined and independent approach to learning as they navigate the challenges of the digital era.

METHOD

This study employs a literature review methodology utilizing a theoretical approach based on the observe and record method. Data were gathered from various sources such as books, scientific journals, research articles, and other relevant materials pertaining to the research topic. The study focuses on the role of parents in enhancing reading skills within the digital era. Data collection involved analyzing diverse literature regarding children's reading skills in the family environment. Data analysis was conducted through in-depth reading, highlighting key information, categorizing data by theme, and systematically

organizing the findings. This process aimed to establish a comprehensive overview of the concepts, theories, and prior research findings concerning the parental role in children's literacy. Additionally, the study compared sources to identify similarities and differences in expert perspectives.

This study is a conceptual review concerning reading models within the context of family literacy; consequently, it does not involve direct fieldwork or primary data collection. The primary focus is to examine and interpret various theories and prior research findings to gain a deeper understanding of strategies parents can employ to enhance their children's reading skills in the digital era. The criteria for selecting sources included topical relevance, recency, and the credibility of the authors and publishers. Thus, the findings are expected to provide a comprehensive overview and serve as a foundation for future research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The ages of 3 to 6 mark a phase where children experience enhanced cognitive and psychomotor abilities this period is known as early childhood. Foundational literacy skills are acquired through the school environment and, most importantly, the family environment. Foundational literacy encompasses the abilities to read, write, listen, and comprehend. These skills are linked to a child's capacity to analyze, perceive information, communicate, and develop their mindset. (Zati, 2018).

Several methods that can be used to foster a culture of literacy among children in the digital era are as follows:

Parents as Role Models for Children's Literacy

The family serves as the first and primary educational environment for a child. Children tend to imitate the habits their parents practice in daily life. If parents habitually read books, engage in discussions, and seek information from positive sources, their children will find it easier to develop an interest in reading. Parents act as role models in shaping their children's literacy habits; children who frequently see their parents reading are more likely to become interested in engaging in the same activity. This aligns with social learning theory, which explains that children learn through the process of observing and imitating the behavior of those closest to them. (Aulinda, 2020).

In the context of the digital era, parents' example is not only shown through their habit of reading physical books, but also through how they use technology wisely. Parents can demonstrate the use of devices to read educational articles, digital books, or search for useful information. In this way, children understand that technology is not only used for entertainment, but also as a means of learning.

Reading Books Aloud as an Effort to Improve Children's Reading Skills

One effective strategy for enhancing children's reading skills is the practice of reading aloud to them. This activity enables children to gain broader language experiences through direct interaction with their parents. Research by Damayanti indicates that digital-based read-aloud activities can boost children's interest in reading while simultaneously strengthening parental involvement in the family literacy process. Through these activities, children not only listen to stories but also learn new vocabulary, comprehend the content, and exercise critical thinking skills.

Reading together offers significant benefits for a child's language development. Children who are frequently read to possess better communication skills compared to those who rarely receive such reading stimulation. Furthermore, reading together strengthens the emotional bond between parent and child,

making the learning process more enjoyable. Parents can choose from a variety of age-appropriate materials, such as picture books, fairy tales, folktales, or digital books. Selecting engaging reading materials can boost a child's motivation to read independently.

Parental Guidance in the Use of Digital Technology

Advancements in digital technology have introduced various learning media that can be utilized to enhance children's reading skills. E-books, educational videos, reading apps, and digital learning platforms serve as tools that help children learn in a more interactive way. However, the use of digital technology requires parental supervision. One of the greatest challenges in fostering children's literacy in the digital age is the high level of exposure to entertainment content, which can distract children from reading activities. (Hikmah, 2024).

Parents need to supervise their children when using digital devices to ensure that technology use remains focused on educational goals. This supervision can be carried out by setting limits on device usage time, selecting age-appropriate applications, and discussing the information children encounter through digital media. Consistent supervision helps children develop the critical thinking skills needed to filter information; they become not merely users of technology, but also capable of understanding and evaluating the information they receive.

Creating a Literacy Rich Environment at Home

The successful development of a child's reading skills is determined not only by the school but also by the family environment. A home that fosters a reading culture will positively influence a child's literacy development. Many families have yet to provide adequate reading materials, thereby limiting children's opportunities to engage with books.

A literacy-rich environment can be created by providing simple bookshelves, a reading corner, children's magazines, storybooks, and easily accessible digital reading materials. Additionally, parents can schedule dedicated time for reading together every day. Simple activities such as reading before bed, discussing the story's content, and asking the child to retell what they have read can help improve reading comprehension. These activities also foster children's speaking and critical thinking skills.

Digital Literacy as a New Skill for Children

The digital era requires children not only to be able to read conventional texts but also to possess digital literacy skills. Digital literacy is the ability to wisely understand, analyze, evaluate, and use information obtained through digital media. Parental digital literacy significantly influences child-rearing practices in the age of technology; parents with strong digital literacy skills tend to be better equipped to guide their children in using technology positively (Mayasari et al., 2024).

In the context of reading, digital literacy helps children gain access to a wider range of knowledge sources. Children can read e-books, educational articles, and interactive learning materials available online. However, the ability to evaluate information must be instilled from an early age so that children are not easily swayed by invalid information. Therefore, parents need to teach their children how to use the internet safely and responsibly. Children need to learn how to identify reliable sources of information and avoid age-inappropriate content.

Obstacles Faced by Parents in Developing Children's Literacy

Although the role of parents is crucial, there are various obstacles to developing children's reading skills. One major hurdle is limited time due to work commitments. Additionally, a lack of knowledge

regarding literacy strategies is a common issue; many parents do not yet understand effective ways to foster their children's interest in reading. Consequently, reading has not yet become a deeply ingrained part of the family culture.

Economic factors also influence children's literacy development. Families with better economic standing generally have greater access to books, the internet, and other educational resources. Conversely, families facing economic constraints often struggle to provide adequate reading materials. Disparities in access to technology and digital literacy lead to differences in children's ability to utilize technology for learning activities. Therefore, support from various stakeholders including schools and the government is essential to expand literacy access for all children (A, 2017).

Parental Strategies for Improving Children's Reading Skills

There are several strategies parents can employ to improve their children's reading skills in the digital era, namely:

1. Make reading together a daily habit.
2. Provide reading materials suited to the child's age and interests.
3. Use educational apps or digital books.
4. Limit excessive use of devices for entertainment.
5. Engage the child in discussions about what they have read.
6. Acknowledge and encourage the child's reading habits.
7. Set a good example regarding reading and technology use.
8. Collaborate between parents and schools to improve children's literacy.

Successfully improving a child's reading skills depends not only on the role of parents but also requires effective cooperation between the family and the school. Schools play a role in providing structured literacy programs, while parents are responsible for reinforcing these habits at home. Strong collaboration between both parties creates a consistent learning environment, ensuring the child receives optimal support in developing their reading abilities. Frequent communication between teachers and parents helps monitor the child's reading progress; teachers can recommend reading materials suited to the child's proficiency, while parents can report on progress and any challenges encountered during home study. Consequently, the learning process becomes more focused and sustainable.

In the digital era, such collaboration can take place through various communication channels, including WhatsApp groups, online learning platforms, and educational apps. The use of technology enables parents to remain involved in their children's learning process, even when time constraints arise due to work commitments. Consequently, synergy between schools and families serves as a crucial factor in supporting children's literacy development.

The Influence of Reading Literacy on Child Development

Reading skills have a significant impact on various aspects of a child's development. Reading not only helps children understand symbols and words but also enhances their thinking abilities, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Children with strong reading skills tend to grasp lesson material more easily and achieve better academic results compared to those with poor reading skills.

In addition to influencing cognitive development, reading also has a positive impact on a child's social and emotional growth. Through reading stories, children can grasp various life values such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and empathy toward others. They also gain new experiences that broaden their horizons and enhance their communication skills. In the digital age, reading skills have

become increasingly important, as the majority of information is presented in digital text formats. Children with strong reading skills find it easier to comprehend information obtained via the internet and are better able to evaluate that information critically. Therefore, developing reading skills from an early age serves as a crucial investment in a child's future success.

The Importance of Cultivating Literacy Habits from an Early Age

Fostering literacy habits from an early age is a strategic step toward building a sustainable reading culture. Children introduced to books and reading activities early on tend to show a greater interest in reading once they reach school age. Such habits also help children develop language skills, expand their vocabulary, and improve their concentration. Parents can initiate these literacy habits through simple activities, such as reading bedtime stories, visiting the library, or providing engaging, age-appropriate storybooks. These activities do not require significant expense yet offer substantial benefits for a child's literacy development.

In the digital era, literacy habits can be fostered by combining the use of printed books and digital media. Children can be introduced to e-books, interactive stories, and educational reading apps. However, the use of digital media still needs to be balanced with direct interaction between parents and children to ensure literacy goals are optimally achieved. The strategy can help strike a balance between the use of digital technology and the cultivation of a reading culture within the family.

Based on a review of the literature, it can be concluded that parents play a significant role in enhancing children's reading skills in the digital era. Parents act not only as educators and motivators but also as companions, facilitators, and supervisors regarding the use of digital technology. Through active involvement, role modeling, the provision of a supportive literacy environment, and the wise use of technology, children's reading abilities can develop optimally. Therefore, collaboration among families, schools, and the community must be continuously strengthened to foster a sustainable culture of literacy for children in the digital era.

CONCLUSION

Based on a literature review regarding the role of parents in enhancing children's reading skills in the digital era, it can be concluded that parents play a crucial role in their children's literacy development. The family serves as the primary educational environment, influencing the formation of reading habits, language proficiency, and cognitive development. Reading skills are acquired not only through formal schooling but also through various literacy activities shared with the family at home. Therefore, parental involvement is a key factor in fostering an interest in reading and building a culture of literacy from an early age.

This study employs a literature review method with a theoretical approach, utilizing listen and note techniques applied to various relevant sources. The findings indicate that the advancement of digital technology has brought about significant changes in children's learning patterns and reading habits. The availability of various digital media facilitates easy access to information and learning resources. However, uncontrolled use of technology also carries the potential for negative impacts, such as a decline in interest.

Parents can play a role in enhancing their children's reading skills in various ways, such as by modeling literacy habits, reading aloud to their children, supervising the use of digital technology, fostering a literacy-rich home environment, and instilling digital literacy skills from an early age. When parents set a positive example in reading and technology use, they encourage their children to emulate these habits.

Furthermore, shared reading activities have been shown to improve language skills, expand vocabulary, enhance reading comprehension, and strengthen the emotional bond between parent and child.

This study also demonstrates that a literacy-supportive family environment significantly influences the development of children's reading skills. Providing age-appropriate reading materials, establishing a daily reading habit, and creating a comfortable learning atmosphere can help boost both interest in reading and reading proficiency. Meanwhile, digital literacy skills have become essential in the modern era, as children are required not only to read conventional texts but also to comprehend and evaluate information obtained through digital media. However, parents face various obstacles in fostering their children's literacy, such as time constraints, a lack of knowledge regarding literacy strategies, and disparities in access to technology and learning resources. Therefore, effective cooperation among families, schools, and the community is necessary to create an environment that supports children's literacy development. Such collaboration can be achieved through intensive communication between teachers and parents, the implementation of sustainable literacy programs, and the use of digital technology as an educational learning tool.

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