

Analysis of the Use of Digital Media in Online Learning for Down Syndrome Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

In connection with the Ministry of Education and Culture of Circular Letter Number 4 of 2020 regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, which requires distance learning, has a significant impact on teachers and students pandemic; with Down syndrome who also have to carry out the learning process online without face-to-face meetings. This research uses descriptive qualitative methods to know how digital media is utilized by teachers and students with Down syndrome and how it impacts children with Down syndrome after using digital media continuously. This research indicates that digital media is used not only for academic learning but also non-academic such as extracurriculars, to train children's creativity and creation. As for the impact of digital media, the informants acknowledged that changes in their children's behavior and emotions were influenced by what they watched. Therefore, it is necessary to have strict supervision and attention from parents/caregivers regarding the use of digital media and their children's viewing.

Sehubungan dengan Surat Edaran Mendikbud Nomor 4 Tahun 2020 tentang situasi pandemi COVID-19 yang mengharuskan dilakukannya pembelajaran jarak jauh, hal ini berdampak besar bagi guru dan siswa dengan down syndrome yang juga harus melakukan proses pembelajaran secara daring tanpa bertatap muka secara langsung. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif dengan tujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana media digital dimanfaatkan oleh para guru dan siswa dengan down syndrome serta bagaimana dampaknya kepada anak-anak dengan down syndrome setelah menggunakan media digital secara terus menerus. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa media digital dimanfaatkan bukan hanya sebagai pembelajaran akademik saja melainkan juga non-akademik seperti ekstrakurikuler untuk melatih kreativitas dan kreasi anak. Adapun dampak media digital itu sendiri para informan mengakui adanya perubahan pada perilaku dan emosi anak mereka yang dipengaruhi oleh tontonan mereka. Oleh karena itu, perlu adanya pengawasan dan perhatian yang ketat dari para orang tua terkait penggunaan media digital serta tontonan anak anak mereka.

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A. Introduction

The era of globalization with high connectivity between individuals at this time makes multimedia one of the aspects of facilities that have a prominent role in the world of information and development of digital communication media. Digital media is inseparable from the openness of mass media, which is increasingly accessible and accessible to the public. In modern times, digital media is the primary reference for individuals searching for news, science, and entertainment information that can be accessed relatively quickly. The convenience presented by digital media can facilitate various needs, especially in the field of information which, in the end, makes it difficult for humans to be separated from the influence of digital media. Currently supporting rapid information services, Indonesia has 70 thousand of online media, of which 62 online media are verified administratively and factually as media online that do journalism (Prestianta et al., 2018).

The current digital era cannot be separated from various social issues and social conditions in the surrounding environment. The development of this digital era has brought many changes to the industrial world. Change only happens with the challenges that follow. According to Angela Merkel, Industry 4.0 is a comprehensive transformation of all aspects of production in the industry through the merger of digital and internet technology with conventional industries (Yustanti & Novita, 2019). The pandemic conditions that occurred due to COVID-19 have significantly impacted the sustainability of every human being worldwide, one of which is Indonesia. The first COVID-19 cases appeared in Indonesia in 2019 under another name, coronavirus disease 2019, with a new type (SARS-CoV-2). COVID-19 was categorized as a pandemic by the WHO (World Health Organization) after there were 2 million cases in more than 213 countries, including Indonesia (Aulia, 2020). COVID19 itself is a virus that can be transmitted to anyone, both babies, children, adolescents, and the elderly, and the elderly by attacking the respiratory system, which can cause disorders of the respiratory system, acute pneumonia, and lead to death.

The spread of COVID-19, which is increasingly widespread throughout the country, then requires the government to implement various policy decisions to prohibit it in order to reduce the spread rate so that it does not increase further. Among them is the implementation of 3M, namely wearing masks, washing hands, and maintaining distance. This appeal is an effort by the government to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in Indonesia. In addition, several other policies, such as WFH (Work from Home) for workers and PJJ (Distance Learning) for students, were also implemented.

The Ministry of Education and Culture The Republic of Indonesia issued a Circular Letter of the Ministry of Education and Culture Number 4 of 2020 in which there is

a point that discusses the implementation of education policies in emergencies of the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). It contains notifications regarding the implementation of learning from home with the teaching and learning process carried out online from each home (Kementrian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2020). Students and teachers can avoid having direct contact in schools to avoid spreading COVID-19. Online learning is carried out through various platforms and applications that can support online learning, which currently uses zoom meeting, google meetings, leads, classrooms, and other educational institution websites.

Restrictions on activities during the pandemic are not only in education but other fields and are also felt by all circles. The restrictions imposed during this pandemic then require everyone to interact virtually and make them use gadgets longer at home. Teachers and students used to the internet are not too surprised if they have to use digital media in the learning process. However, it will be different for teachers and participants. Students not accustomed to using digital media such as SLB (Sekolah Luar Biasa/Special needs School) students with mental disabilities, one of which is students with Down syndrome. The COVID-19 epidemic has had a significant impact on children with special needs, as well as their families. Children with special needs are most susceptible to experiencing learning and emotional difficulties due to the cessation of treatment services and the challenges posed by remote learning (Ayuningtyas et al., 2021).

Down Syndrome is one child with special needs with mental and physical developmental limitations caused by chromosome developmental disorders. The DS complex phenotype is caused by an imbalance in the dosage of genes on human chromosome 21 (Hsa 21). Scientists have focused their efforts on fully characterizing of this chromosome in the past few years due to the hereditary origin of DS and the relatively modest size of Hsa 21 (Asim et al., 2015). Down syndrome children generally have more disorders than other disability children, especially at the level of intelligence (Marta, 2017). People with Down syndrome have easily recognizable characteristics such as a relatively small head shape with a flat head. The face usually appears between a flat nose, a pursed mouth, and a tongue that protrudes outwards (Rina, 2016). According to the Indonesia Center for Biodiversity and Biotechnology (ICCB) Bogor, there are 300 thousand children with Down syndrome (Ayuningrum & Afif, 2020).

Interacting with others becomes an essential difficulty for children with Down syndrome. A child with Down syndrome will have a slow learning capture force, so they will have difficulty learning to speak or catch contact signals from the interlocutor. According to reports, Intellectual Disability, which is determined by an IQ score of 70 or more, is present in every member of the down syndrome populace. However, there is significant interindividual variability for this CONSTRUCT in down syndrome. The majority of people with down syndrome fall into the mild to severe

(IQ 50–69) spectrum of Intellectual disability. However, some cases achieve IQ levels comparable to kids without Intellectual disability (MacLennan, 2020). Therefore at this stage, parents have a different role in teaching their children to interact with others (Renawati et al., 2017). There are several conditions for people with Down syndrome that require special attention, namely hearing matter, congenital heart disease, vision, nutrition, abnormalities in bones, or some other things that affect the child's health (Siti Masruroh, 2017).

Down syndrome itself is one of the causes of child development disorders that cause speech, language, and developmental disorders caused by disorders of the central nervous system. This language condition is called dyslexia, which usually has learning difficulties due to slow attention, metacognition, memory, and generalizations compared to other children. Treatments are based on each person's individual strengths and limits as well as his or her physical and intellectual needs. Any kid with a Down syndrome diagnosis should be given access to multidisciplinary support through the NHS (Windsperger & Hoehl, 2021).

Despite intellectual disabilities, persons with disabilities also have the same legal status and human rights as citizens, guaranteed by the state for the survival of any country residents as stipulated in the Law on Disabilities Number 8 of 2016. In the act, the government calls on all parties to realize equal rights and opportunities for persons with disabilities to live successfully, independently and discriminatory-free towards an inclusive and disability-friendly Indonesia (Ndaumanu, 2020). Then what is interpreted is that people with disabilities, such as children with Down syndrome, have the same right to play, enjoy public facilities, or live everyday life as other citizens.

Government regulations related to distance learning for students and teachers also apply to students in SLB schools. Teachers must conduct learning with students online through digital media. People with Down syndrome find it difficult if they have to do online learning without the role of a teacher in person. Students also face the new challenge of continuing to provide learning materials to students without having to meet face-to-face. Therefore, the role of digital media is significant as an intermediary for teachers and students of SLB in communicating online. Although in the end, this distance learning will make children with Down syndrome more exposed to gadget screens.

This research focuses on digital media's utilization and influence on children with Down syndrome. During the pandemic, the use of digital media for down syndrome children has a higher intensity. This high intensity is influenced by all academic and non-academic learning activities that use digital media online. Previous research by Amellya Ayu related therapeutic communication with Flash Card media in children who experience it (Pramesti & Qamaria, 2022). Down syndrome Flash Card contains

images, text, or symbols to stimulate memory or thought processes. Research related to server-based educational games as an evaluation of learning in children with Down syndrome has also been conducted by M. Riyan Saputra (Saputra, 2021). This educational game is a letter and number recognition game with a more exciting model to attract the attention of children with Down syndrome to understand their learning digitally.

Research related to online learning problems for children with special needs during the pandemic is a reference reading in this study, such as research on online learning problems for children with special needs during the COVID-19 pandemic conducted by Luqman Hidayat (Hidayat & Nurfarjati, 2021). The results of the study explained that there are several complex problems, such as lack of readiness of teachers and parents, lack of skill of parents to the emergence of boredom in children. A similar study was also conducted by Elok Mutiara Rahmawati, who analyzed the supporting factors for online learning outcomes in children with special needs (Rahmawati, 2020). However, the study did not explain factors related to down syndrome children due to a lack of informants related to children with Down syndrome.

The novelty of this research is the difference in the subject and object of research that is more focused on one particular time and sees different analysis results from the point of view. In the current research, researchers will focus on the development and changes in emotions and behaviors of people with Down syndrome that occur during distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic based on the continuous use of digital media. Through this research, researchers intend to find out and analyze the use of digital media and how the impact of its use on children with Down syndrome during the COVID-19 pandemic.

B. Research Methods

Judging from the nature of the data, the approach used in this study is qualitative, aiming to describe and describe existing phenomena, and is related to the research topic. This approach is descriptive to form a systematic, factual, and accurate description, picture, or painting regarding the facts, properties, and relationships between the phenomena investigated (Prasanti, 2018). The type of qualitative research used in this study intends to obtain information about the use of digital media by people with Down syndrome during distance learning in the pandemic era. COVID-19 and its impact on them. Based on the approach and judging from the subject of the study, this study uses phenomenological research strategies. Phenomenology is an application to express the similarity of meanings that are the essence of a concept or phenomenon that a group of individuals consciously and individually experiences in their life (Suyanto, 2019).

This study uses data collection techniques through in-depth interviews and brief observations when conducting interviews with parents/caregivers of the research subjects. In its research, An Parent or guardian of a child with Down syndrome is the main informant in obtaining primary data. According to Soros, the interview allows researchers to collect diverse data from respondents in different situations and contexts (Yusra et al., 2021). Using interview techniques, researchers can ask questions directly, explore the questions more deeply, and get answers that detail the questions that have been asked.

The data collection technique in this study uses miles & Huberman interaction data analysis model steps which explain that the analysis consists of three paths of activities carried out simultaneously in reducing data, presenting data, and drawing conclusions. In order to strengthen the results of this study, researchers used five characteristics of data validity techniques, namely openness, conformability, truth, credibility, and transferability.

C. Results And Findings

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought changes to the current digitalization era. The rampant use of digital media as a liaison between individuals in contact and communication to maintain relationships. Activities or activities every day are inseparable from the use of digital media both in education and work. The implementation of WFH and PJJ is sought to prevent the spread of COVID-19, which can spread widely and quickly. This requires every human being to always follow technological developments and updates. The use of digital media is the most effective step that can be pursued during a pandemic, with various advantages and disadvantages. The continuous use of digital media must be integrated with the role of the internet, applications, and new platforms present to support the needs during online learning, such as zoom, google meetings, leads, and other supporting agency websites.

Changes in the world of education require teachers to prepare materials virtually, and students must also be prepared to receive learning materials virtually. Online learning has particular challenges. The location of students and teachers are separated during implementation, which makes teachers unable to supervise students' activities during learning directly, so there is no guarantee that students are earnest in listening to reviews from teachers (Sadikin & Hamidah, 2020). This is in line with the distance learning implemented in SLB. Children with Down syndrome require special supervision and attention when conducting Virtual learning with direct supervision from parents and guardians at home. This is implemented so that more or fewer parents can replace SLB teachers in direct assistance when children are learning.

The following are the results of the research analysis along with the discussion that the researcher has summarized from the results of interviews with informants related to the use of digital media during the distance learning period and the impact of using digital media during the COVID-19 pandemic has become more commonly used by children with Down syndrome.

1. Utilization of Digital Media during the Distance Learning Period

The presence of new media facilities currently provides convenience for people with disabilities who need special access to get the same convenience facilities as non-disabled people. This is not only a convenience for people with disabilities but also for companions or guardians who accompany them. As stipulated in the Disability Law No. 8 of 2016. With these laws and regulations, the government calls on all parties to realize equal rights and opportunities for persons with disabilities to live successful, independent, and discriminatory-free lives toward an inclusive and disability-friendly Indonesia. This can be interpreted to mean that persons with disabilities also have the same legal status and human rights as citizens, and the state guarantees this for the survival of every citizen.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, children with Down syndrome were forced to do online learning with their teacher teachers from their respective homes accompanied by parents/guardians. This is undoubtedly a challenge for teachers and accompanying parents because the catchment power of children with Down syndrome is lower than that of children in general. Parents must be more patient in accompanying and accompanying their children when they have to do online learning. The teachers then have to provide learning materials with more creative scopes and ideas so that students with Down syndrome become interested and stay focused on the teacher. The SB informant submitted that:

When learning using Zoom Meeting with their teachers, children are sometimes also given assignments that must be collected through the teacher's Whatsapp. Therefore, we have to continue asking the child if he/she is learning so that his/her attention is not going anywhere. We also listen to the teacher's words and then explain them to the child.

As previously stated, children with Down syndrome will have low catching power and focus, so their attention is easily distracted. Therefore, teachers will go the extra mile than before. Parents and teachers should come together to help students stay focused while studying. In addition, study time for students with Down syndrome during the online period tends to change faster than usual. Learning is carried out a maximum of only 4 hours compared to standard times, which range from 67 hours. This is done for the effectiveness of learning time and focuses power so that the students' eyes are not exposed to the gadget screen for too long.

Focusing on managing virtual learning time processing is also crucial for children's ability to capture. Previous research carried out by Bertias states that time management has a crucial role in determining the learning success of students (Sofyananjani, 2021). It also focuses on the intellect capture of children with lower Down syndrome so that teachers must painstakingly transfer each material slowly to the students and also to parents so as not to cause miscommunication. A reduction in learning time is also applied to maintain the vision of children with Down syndrome so that it does not decrease or there are other problems.

Virtual distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic did not bring children's creativity and creation to a standstill. The teachers continued to do different extracurricular activities on Saturdays. As for the extracurricular activities, as stated by the VA informant:

Even though they do it virtually, they still do extracurricular activities. The extracurriculars are different, and sometimes they cook, then there is taekwondo, then dance, and many other artistic activities.

Extracurricular activities carried out by children with Down syndrome differ from children in general. The activities they do tend to be lighter, as in the cooking agenda, they will learn to spread butter on bread and sprinkle toppings. Another small activity that can train the daily lives of people with Down syndrome is to move more and get used to these activities. Previous research on the evaluation of art extracurricular programs for children with Down syndrome conducted by Adelia Nurriszki shows that the implementation of art extracurricular programs can develop social interaction skills for children with Down syndrome (Damayanti, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic has not dampened teachers or students with Down syndrome in learning. Teachers continue to carry out a series of activities and learning that are even more varied by utilizing digital media as an intermediary means. Teachers can still interact face-to-face with students through zoom media, play educational videos, or practice some activities virtually, which students will later practice with Parent/guardian assistance at home. Digital media is also used in several other activities, such as collecting assignments, exams, meetings between teachers and parents, as well as collecting grades.

2. The Impact of Digital Media Use During the COVID-19 Pandemic

This research also found that the increasingly frequent use of digital media during the COVID-19 pandemic has made children with Down syndrome more aware of the presence of digital media around them. There is a curiosity that arises when they see and use it frequently. For example, they are starting to understand some of the functions of tools on a laptop, such as mouse functions, keyboards, or some keys on

tabs that they often use when learning online. Down syndrome children generally begin to follow what their parents or companions often do. They already know how to blame smartphones and open some applications they often use. As SB said in the research interview, she said:

They like to imitate what we do, so if every day they look at us on the laptop if they want to start learning later a few months later, they will try to try themselves to press the button themselves

Even though they tend to grow up in adolescence, down syndrome children generally still often do activities carried out by young children in general. For example, 15-year-old children with Down syndrome still often act like children who are eight years old. The continuous use of digital media makes them unknowingly become more understanding of technology and updates. Not infrequently, they also become aware of what trends exist when watching the spectacle they often see on Youtube. In general, with children's understanding, they will often imitate and say words that they often hear through their spectacle. This can indirectly train their audiovisual thinking power.

Changes in children with Down syndrome's emotional and behavioral side during the use of digital media cannot be separated from the observations of parents and their family members. Informants said that often they see different behaviors from their children, such as if the child starts to dance a new dance that is going viral or spit out a word that is trending at the moment. As stated by the VA states:

Sometimes, it arrives after they open the tab. They like to arrive at the scene, so we are surprised. Wow, what do you see, this kid? How come there is something different? However, sometimes it is funny to see their behavior; later, they laugh at themselves, so they are active too. As long as it is still reasonable, please, if something is not good, then we remind it.

What they imitate is based on what they watch on youtube. Parents/guardians acknowledge that they have set up the app expressly as a child's spectacle so that what their child sees does not deviate and is age-appropriate and reasonable to emulate. However, in the end, some other content may appear in the reference section. One of the informants also admitted that this digital media made their children more astute. At the time of the interview, SB said:

They have acquired intelligence. We are starting to give you a good learning video. As long as we see them quietly paying attention to the video, later, when we stay, they will start clicking on random videos or images that are filtering, so every time we come back to monitor them, surely the spectacle has changed. Furthermore, when we came in, they pretended not to know, coded like I did not, mom, that is it.

Down syndrome, children learn the behaviors and words they often see and hear through the spectacle they usually see and the emotions in them. They begin to understand when and what people will be angry with, and they also learn when anything can make them cry. One of the informants felt this sometimes startled their family because of the child's emotional changes, and not infrequently. They also admitted that sometimes the child becomes more dramatic. Informant VA relates that:

Like to be surprised, how come suddenly the child becomes super happy, but it will not take long to arrive so sad like a gloomy person. For example, let us ask for the tab because the playtime is up. They will immediately show a gloomy expression while giving the tab, and then there will be a theatrical word, turning the body with the shoulders sags, for example.

Through the process of conducting research interviews and analysis, researchers have discovered that the nature of a spectacle experienced by children has a substantial impact on their cognitive abilities. Both typically developing youngsters and those with Down syndrome have a tendency to mimic and emulate what they observe on their electronic displays. Digital media serves as a valuable educational resource for individuals with Down syndrome, supplementing the instruction offered by teachers and parents. Hence, it is imperative for parents/caregivers of children with Down syndrome to maintain constant vigilance and oversight when their child engages with digital media. Additionally, family members and other individuals should provide guidance and intervene if the child exhibits inappropriate behavior or uses inappropriate language, in order to prevent such actions.

D. Conclusion

Utilizing digital media in the era of distance learning facilitates virtual face-to-face communication between teachers and students with Down syndrome. Digital media is utilized for both academic and non-academic purposes to facilitate children's learning and foster their creativity, even when they are at home under the supervision of their parents/caregivers. The persistent utilization of digital media during the COVID-19 epidemic has brought about alterations and consequences for children diagnosed with Down syndrome.

This is based on the firsthand experience of parents/caregivers who witness the rapid learning progress of children with Down syndrome. Furthermore, children frequently replicate activities they observe and imitate the speech they listen to. This subsequently aids children with Down syndrome in developing their auditory and visual perception. Researchers have determined that the utilization of digital media can positively affect children with Down syndrome, provided that they are constantly supervised by their parents. This is because parents must continue to restrict the usage of digital media to protect their children's eye health and prevent exposure to inappropriate content.

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